Hafa Adai!

Medicaid unwinding COVID-19 public health emergency. PAGE 2
Cruz takes issue with questions about $11M Tinian power project. PAGE 3

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Survivors still being found as quake death toll tops 28,000

By JUSTIN SPIKE, ABDELRAHMAN SHAHEEN and ZEYNEP BILGINSOY
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LATAKIA, Syria (AP)—Ibrahim Zakaria lost track of time drifting into and out of consciousness while trapped for nearly five days in the rubble of his home following the massive earthquake that struck Turkey and Syria this week.

The 23-year-old cellphone shop worker from the Syrian town of Jableh survived on dirty drips of water and eventually lost hope that

See SURVIVORS on Page 4

IN TESTIMONY BEFORE US SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Palacios backs Marianas resident bill

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

» Governor also seeks US Senate's help to repeal CW touchback provision

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios has expressed strong support for a bill that would encourage approximately 1,600 long-term foreign workers living on the islands since 2015 to remain in the CNMI by offering them a permanent resident status.

See PALACIOS on Page 4

MARIANAS CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE PHOTO

CNMI Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, second from right, is joined by, from left, U.S. Virgin Islands Gov. Albert Bryan Jr., Guam Gov. Lourdes "Lou" Leon Guerrero, American Samoa Gov. Lemanu P.S. Mauga, and Puerto Rico Gov. Pedro R. Pierluisi during a U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources hearing last week.

Marianas Southern Airway and Commonwealth officials are joined by other dignitaries to cut the ribbon for the airline's inaugural flight from Rota to Guam over the weekend.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

MSA makes first Rota-Guam flight

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Marianas Southern Airway officially kicked off its Rota-Guam route with an inaugural flight from Rota to Guam and back over the weekend.

Last Friday, Rota dignitaries and members of the Rota community joined Marianas Southern Airways officials and staff in launching the air-

See MSA on Page 4

'Central gov't still owes MPLT over $10M'

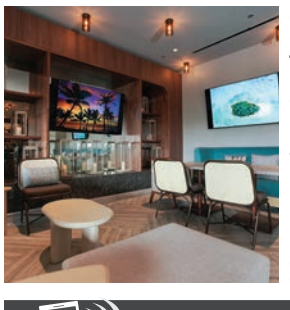
DeLeon Guerrero

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

As of Thursday last week, more than $10 million remains due and outstanding from the central government on the original $15 million that the government borrowed from the Marianas Public Land Trust to pay vendors for recovery efforts from Super Typhoon Yutu in 2018.

See MPLT on Page 4

INSIDE



BUSINESS
The Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan's Mari Bar is ready for gridiron fans in Super Bowl LVII today.
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HEALTH & WELLNESS
Genetic testing can help your health care team understand if you have an increased risk for cancer.
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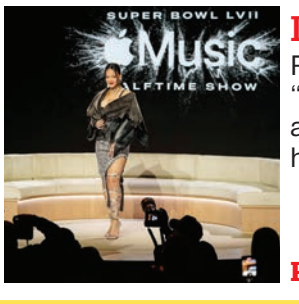

LIFE & STYLE
Rihanna is promising "a jam-packed show" at her Super Bowl halftime performance.
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GOT A NEWS TIP? TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440 FAX: 235-3740 EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

Local

Medicaid unwinding COVID-19 public health emergency

The Commonwealth Medicaid Agency would like to inform the community and its members that the Medicaid Program will be re-determining eligibility for individuals whose coverage expired in March 2020 but was continuously covered throughout the duration of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.

On Dec. 29, 2022, President Biden signed into law U.S. Public Law 117-328, Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023. In the provision related to the COVID-19 PHE, CAA, 2023 the continuous enrollment requirement is set to expire on March 31, 2023. The Commonwealth Medicaid Agency is encouraging all members covered under the COVID-19 PHE continuous coverage to submit an application to be re-determined to avoid losing coverage after April 1, 2023.

In addition, Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra has declared that COVID-19 PHE ends on May 11, 2023. This means that individuals covered under Presumptive Eligibility ends on May 31, 2023. The Commonwealth Medicaid Agency advices for members of the PE group to submit their full application at the Medicaid Office to determine if they're eligible for full benefits to avoid losing health coverage.

The Commonwealth Medicaid Agency is the only U.S. territory that bases its eligibility criteria on the Supplemental Security Income requirements. All individuals who apply for Medicaid must be a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, Freely Associated States citizens or non-U.S. citizens who meets the immigration status to be eligible for benefits and must be a resident of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

For more information, contact or visit our office locations at:

■ **Saipan**
Capitol Hill, Gov't. Bldg. 1252
Tel: (670) 664-4880/4882
Office Hours: Monday to Thursdays – 7:30am to 1pm (Closed on Fridays)

■ **Tinian**
Tinian Health Center
Tel: (670) 433-9263/9233
Office Hours: Monday to Friday – 7:30am to 4:30pm

■ **Rota**
Rota Health Center
Tel: (670) 532-9461/62
Office Hours: Monday to Friday – 7:30am to 4:30pm

Application forms are available at: medicaid.cnmi.mp ***(PR)***

Apatang appoints Dr. Sablan to MPLT board

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Acting governor David M. Apatang has appointed former Education Commissioner Dr. Rita Aldan Sablan to serve as a member of the Marianas Public Land Trust, representing Saipan/women.

Apatang informed Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) Thursday that he and Gov. Arnold I. Palacios are confident that Sablan's membership with the MPLT board is critical and that her nomination and, hopefully, subsequent confirmation by the Senate, will ensure consistency and continuity in fulfilling the goals and objectives of the MPLT.

Sablan

In confirmed by the Senate, Sablan will serve the remaining term vacated by Maria Frica T. Pangelinan, which will expire on Jan. 9, 2024.

Apatang said MPLT plays a very important role in the development of the Commonwealth and that they have every confidence that Sablan will devote her time and efforts in the best interests of all people.

Sablan was Juan N. Babauta's running mate as lieutenant governor under an independent team in the November 2018 general election.

Then-governor Ralph DLG Torres and his running mate, then-Senate president Arnold I. Palacios, defeated Babauta-Sablan by a huge margin.

Pangelinan, Martin B. Ada and Peter Q. Cruz recently resigned from the MPLT board, leaving the board with just three trustees.

Palacios recently nominated former Marianas Public Land Trust board chair Alvaro Santos and Tinian businessman Phillip Mendiola Long to serve as a member of the MPLT board to represent Saipan and Tinian, respectively.

If confirmed by the Senate, Santos would serve the remainder of Ada's term which will expire on Jan. 9, 2024.

Santos used to serve as MPLT board chair.

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Cruz takes issue with questions about $11M Tinian power project

» NMHC official says if funding for Tinian power cable project is reprogrammed, high risk that HUD will recapture $11M

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Rep. Vincent Seman Aldan (D-Saipan) described Thursday as "very disturbing and [is a] triple redundancy" an $11 million underground power cables project on Tinian, which Sen. Francisco Q. Cruz (R-Tinian) did not appreciate and described as an interference, insisting that the island needs the project because of strong typhoons.

Aldan

At a joint public hearing by the Senate and House Public Utilities, Transportation, and Communications committees in the Senate chamber, Northern Marianas Housing Corp. deputy corporate director Zenie P. Mafnas also stated that the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. has found the power underground cable project on Tinian to be critical and that if they reprogram any monies intended for that project, there is a high risk that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development will take back the $11 million.

Later in the hearing, Aldan, who chairs the House PUTC committee, apologized if there is a misunderstanding and stated that he is not attacking or going against the second senatorial district, or Tinian. He said it's just the project "seems out of…[priority]." Shortly before the committees adjourned, Aldan again apologized; he said there were a lot of confusing questions and misunderstandings.

Aldan and Senate PUTC Committee chair Sen. Paul A. Manglona (Ind-Rota) presided over the joint public hearing with NMHC officials regarding the status of the projects under the $243.9 million Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery grant agreement.

During the discussions, Aldan said he is sure that NMHC could use that $11 million somewhere else instead of giving somebody the "luxury of triple redundancy."

"It's just doesn't make any sense. An $11 million is a lot of money that could go to other projects that are more critical," Aldan said.

He said that, according to his "sources," there are already concrete power poles at a certain location on Tinian and that those buildings where the underground power cables are to be installed already have backup generators.

Cruz

"It does not make sense to me how an underground power cable would benefit a building that already has a backup generator. You got an above[ground] cable, an underground cable, and a backup generator that would only benefit this certain location," Aldan said.

He urged NMHC to have their inspectors take a look at this project "because it's a triple redundancy."

Aldan said his "sources" told him that, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the project is not eligible for a grant under FEMA because it is not a critical infrastructure.

"It's kind of like a waste of money," he said.

That's more of a CUC question since NMHC is just a funding source, according to Kimo Rosario, who is the CNMI CDBG-DR Planning and Program Support program manager. "We don't determine which projects…have…a priority for them," Rosario pointed out.

Mafnas said they have met with Tinian leadership probably 10 times, as Tinian being the most impacted and most distressed area as a result of Super Typhoon Yutu's devastation in 2018.

"We've had engineers go out, we've had engineers walked through. But no one knows more than the Tinian leadership themselves," she said.

Mafnas said they held public hearings on the project, solicited public comments, and have not received any complaint against the project.

She disclosed that they met with the CUC deputy director and his engineers and utility head last week, and that they reiterated to her how critical the project is when she asked again because they have been hearing these types of comments that Aldan has raised.

"Since three years ago, we've been soliciting for comments and we've had walkthroughs again with engineers," Mafnas said.

She pointed out that this is not as simple as asking HUD to give them $11 million and they will fund the project.

"There is a lot of hard work that went into this," Mafnas added.

Cruz said this has been a discussion for many years and if there is a redundancy issue,

See CRUZ on Next Page

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Rip current until Wednesday night

The public is being warned of a high risk of rip currents through late Wednesday night.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Guam and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, dangerous rip currents are present in east facing-reefs of the Marianas. Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water.

The public is reminded to stay out of the water along east facing reef lines. Swim near a lifeguard. If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don't swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore and call or wave for help. ***(PR)***

MPLT

From Page 1

This was learned from Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan), who disclosed that the MPLT note is being paid down from the very funds that get transferred by MPLT to the central government.

At that rate "it'll take more than five years for the outstanding note to be fully paid, which means five plus years of no direct benefit to the rightful owners," she said.

The Senate president discussed the MPLT loan in response to *Saipan Tribune*'s request for comments about her Legislative Initiative 23-1 that seeks to amend the NMI Constitution to ensure that transferred accrued interest on the investment proceeds of MPLT is reserved for the benefit of the Northern Marianas descent population.

Deleon Guerrero said the initiative is very important for NMDs who are the rightful owners of the MPLT Trust funds, which originated and continues to be from the revenues of public land leases owned collectively by NMDs.

She noted that there have been similar initiatives introduced in prior legislatures, but not one was passed.

To date, the income after expenses of MPLT continues to go directly to the general fund and co-mingled with other CNMI revenues, she said.

The trust corpus continues to be fully vested in the market; however, the question we must ask ourselves is when will the rightful owners of the trust funds here being the NMDs begin to directly benefit from the trust income and is MPLT's creation intended to be the central government's bank account and/or savior when government cash flow is running dry/short?" the senator said.

She said the initiative's intention is to create equity for NMD families through the creation of another investment portfolio under strict management where the growth of the capital can be invested in tangible social programs.

DeLeon Guerrero cited as an example housing, where a family can have immediate acquisition of asset that gives them net worth value, lifting them out of poverty and providing them a sense of hope for a better life.

The president believes that this initiative is worthy for consideration for the intended beneficiaries.

CRUZ

From Page 3

CUC will not support this one. Cruz said Tinian was severely hit by Yutu and as a result, the Tinian leadership decided to have underground power cables only for those areas to have communication, for shelter, and distribution center.

"We're not distributing the entire Tinian with that underground cable. It's only for that purpose," the senator pointed out.

Cruz said when disaster comes, it does not matter whether there are concrete power poles, as those will fall.

"But I don't appreciate [this], Mr. Chairman—a different senatorial precinct going against another precinct. We must help one another," he said.

Cruz said they never interfere with any senatorial district, but rather work together to help the community.

The senator said he thought that they were there for the joint hearing to alleviate some of the hardship and see how they can push the project forward and not delay and kill time and lose the money.

"How can this move forward when we're also against the project?" Cruz asked.

Aldan said it has come to his attention that some of the buildings that will be benefitting from this underground cables are privately owned. "I wonder who own those private buildings that will be benefitting from this underground cable that costs $11 million? And if this is not considered a redundancy," Aldan said.

Cruz said this project is for the Tinian command center, the hospital, disaster shelter, and the distribution center. "It is not [going to] benefit, as you stated, the private sector," the senator said.

Aldan and Manglona then called for a recess at the request of Rep. Marissa Flores (Ind-Saipan).

The hearing resumed after a few minutes. Cruz did not return. Aldan apologized "for the misunderstanding" that he's attacking another senatorial district.

Before Cruz made his statements and in response to Aldan's concerns, Sen. Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian) said it's appropriate that CUC has to sit before them at the hearing. He said the amount is substantial but they wouldn't be getting $250 million and change if the project is not going to cost that much.

"And if the concern is the redundancy and all that, I think we need to bring in CUC and allow them to answer some of the questions," the senator said.

Hofschneider pointed out that members of the Tinian Legislative Delegation see the need for that project. "I think the issue with us here in the CNMI is we're reactionary sometimes. We should be having underground power lines on Saipan for that matter," he said.

SURVIVORS

From Page 1

he'd be saved.

"I said I am dead and it will be impossible for me to live again," Zakaria, who was rescued Friday night, told The Associated Press on Saturday from his bed at a hospital in the coastal city of Latakia where his 60-year-old mother, Duha Nurallah, was also recovering.

Five days after two powerful earthquakes hours apart caused thousands of buildings to collapse, killing more than 28,000 people and leaving millions homeless, rescuers were still pulling unlikely survivors from the ruins—one of them just 7 months old.

Although each rescue elicited hugs and shouts of "Allahu akbar!"—"God is great!"—from the weary men and women working tirelessly in the freezing temperatures to save lives, they were the exception in a region blanketed by grief, desperation and mounting frustration.

More than a dozen survivors were rescued Saturday, including a family in Kahramanmaras, the Turkish city closest to the epicenter of Monday's quake. Crews there helped 12-year-old Nehir Naz Narli to safety before going back for her parents.

In Gaziantep province, which borders Syria, a family of five was rescued from a demolished building in the city of Nurdagi, and a man and his 3-year-old daughter were pulled from debris in the town of Islahiye, television network HaberTurk reported. A 7-year-old girl was also rescued in Hatay province.

In Elbistan, a district in Kahramanmaras province, 20-year-old Melisa Ulku and another person were saved from the rubble 132 hours after the quake struck. Before she was brought to safety, police asked onlookers not to cheer or clap so as not to interfere with nearby rescue efforts.

Turkish TV station NTV reported that a 44-year-old man in Iskenderun, in Hatay province, was rescued 138 hours into his ordeal. Crying rescuers called it a miracle, with one saying they weren't expecting to find anyone alive but as they were digging, they saw his eyes and he said his name. In the same province, NTV also reported that a baby boy named Hamza was found alive in Antakya 140 hours after the quake. Some details of his rescue, including how he survived so long, weren't immediately clear.

Not every attempt ended happily. Zeynep Kahraman, who was brought out of the rubble after a spectacular rescue that took 50 hours, died at a hospital overnight. The ISAR German team who rescued her were shocked and saddened.

"It is important that the family could say goodbye, that they could see each other one more time, that they could hug each other again," a member of the rescue team told German TV news channel n-tv.

The rescues came amid growing frustration over the Turkish government's response to the earthquake, which has killed 24,617 people and injured at least 80,000 people in Turkey alone.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan acknowledged earlier in the week that the initial response was hampered by the extensive damage to roads and other infrastructure that made it difficult to reach some points. He also said the worst-affected area was 500 kilometers (310 miles) in diameter and was home to 13.5 million people in Turkey.

That has meant rescue crews have had to pick and choose how and where to help.

During a tour of quake-damaged cities Saturday, Erdogan said a disaster of this scope was rare and again referred to it as the "disaster of the century."

PALACIOS

From Page 1

In his testimony before the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on the "State of the U.S. Territories" last Thursday, Palacios noted that a major part of the CNMI's struggle to carry out critical infrastructure and development projects is a shortage of labor and serious uncertainties affecting the stability of the Commonwealth's workforce.

The governor also appealed to the committee to support in the repeal of the "touchback provision," noting the diminishing number of Commonwealth-Only Transitional Worker program permits issued every year and with the CW program's end just around the corner in 2019.

The "touchback provision" requires CW workers to exit the CNMI for at least 30 days prior to the submission of their third renewal petition. That means they must stay away from the CNMI while their third renewal permit is being processed and may only return once the permit is approved—a period that could last several months.

Palacios appealed for the Senate' support to consider amending the U.S. Workforce Act of 2018, which governs the administration of the CW program.

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP), who recently introduced the bill to grant permanent residence to certain foreign long-term workers—called H.R. 560 or the Marianas Population Stabilization Act—stated over the weekend that he is thankful to Palacios for voicing his support for his bill.

Sablan stated in his *e-kilili* newsletter that his bill is intended to shore up the shrinking Marianas population—both to protect the islands' economic viability and as a response to Chinese expansionism in the Western Pacific.

Under H.R. 560, 21 foreign investors in the Marianas since before 2009 could also apply for the permanent Marianas-only resident status.

Palacios said in his testimony Thursday that, as Sablan has stated, the population loss in the CNMI and resulting loss of economic viability not only hurts everyone in the Marianas, but also has implications for the U.S. strategic position in the Western Pacific.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

MSA

From Page 1

line's inaugural flight from Rota to Guam at around 11am.

Among the passengers of MSA's first official Rota–Guam flight were Sen. Paul Manglona (Ind-Rota), Sen. Donald Manglona (Ind-Rota), Rota Mayor Aubry Hocog, Rep. Julie Ogo (Ind-Rota), and Marianas Visitors Authority board member Agida Quitugua.

According to MSA vice president William Giles, the inaugural flight officially kicks off its new flight schedule.

"We took a group from Saipan to Rota and then the inaugural portion of the flight was from Rota to Guam. It was to [launch] our new schedule—a twice-daily flight from Rota to Guam every weekday," said Giles.

With its newly added flight schedule, MSA aims to provide the Rota community with an affordable option to fly to Guam for necessary appointments and other errands they may need to run without the need to stay overnight, he said.

"This flight will provide the Rota community with regular Rota to Guam service every day and will allow people from Rota a full day on Guam for critical appointments, shopping, and other things that typically they would need a whole day for. Our Rota to Guam flights also start at a reasonable rate of $89," Giles said.

When asked why it took a while to launch their Rota–Guam route, Giles said MSA was waiting for its new Tecnam aircraft and was training new captains to efficiently fulfill the flight schedules.

"There's a lot of different reasons why it took a while to launch our Rota–Guam route. Its started off with waiting for our third Tecnam Aircraft. We had initially ordered three but we were waiting for the third one to arrive, which arrived last January. Also, we had to train additional pilots so we now have a full complement of planes and pilots that can run all our flights," he said.

Currently MSA has five captains and a complementary group of first officers to go with the captains.

Ultimately, MSA hopes that this new addition of flights traveling from Rota to Guam will benefit the Rota community as well as boost tourism for Rota.

"Also, with this new flight, this will allow people from Guam the opportunity to directly visit Rota so we hope this will be a boost in tourism for Rota as well," he said.

Now that MSA has successfully connected all the islands in the Marianas through affordable, efficient air service, MSA is looking at expanding the number of flights it currently provides.

"We're really hoping to add more flights to Tinian. We currently have two daily flights from Saipan to Tinian and we hope to add more. Then, once we have progressed, we hope to add daily flights from Guam to Tinian," Giles said.

The Power Team is coming Saipan to perform at AMP

A group of athletes who perform exhibitions of power, strength, and speed, called The Power Team, will be performing at the American Memorial Park on Feb.22-25, from 7pm to 8pm, and on Feb. 26, 2023, from 3pm to 4pm.

For more information, contact Saipan Community Church pastor Steve Dame via email at pastorsteve@saipancommunityschool.com or call (670) 484-7742.

According to a press release from the group, The Power Team has performed inspired, and motivated audiences in every state and in over 40 countries for over 30 years.

"These giant men, many weighing over 300 lbs, can blow up hot water bottles like balloons, snap baseball bats like twigs, lift telephone poles overhead, rip phone books and license plates like pieces of paper, and smash walls of ice and concrete.

"The Power Team has several world record holders, former NFL football players, and professional wrestlers. They have been endorsed by over 50 governors, senators, and congressmen for their positive contribution to the lives of America's families.

"In 1976, The Power Team became the "Original" strength team and evangelistic association, utilizing visually explosive feats of strength to communicate positive messages to audiences in churches, civic centers, stadiums, and coliseums all across the nation, as well as the world. They have been featured in *People* magazine, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and on the popular TV shows, Walker, Texas Ranger, Ripley's Believe It or Not, and most recently, several appearances on Steve Harvey's Big Time Show on the WB, watched by an estimated 20 million. They have also been featured on ABC, NBC, CBS and CNN, and even spoofed on Saturday Night Live and Mad TV on the Fox network. For over 10 years they have had their own television show called The Power Connection, viewed by millions around the world each week.

"The Power Team has performed in over 26,000 school assemblies over the past 20 years and is ranked as one of the top school assemblies in the nation. Believing that inspiration and motivation equals academic and personal achievement, they tackle the tough issues of drugs, alcohol, violence, abstinence, peer pressure, and suicide.

"Schools appreciate the ability of The Power Team to customize the topics, content, and presentations to match their audiences. From elementary ages to high school, young people all over the world have been challenged and changed by their positive messages.

"The various members of The Power Team is among America's most sought-after speakers, encouraging people to live a life of excellence and challenging them to be the best that they can be. The Power Team has an unparalleled history, with proven effective methods, that churches, corporations, cities and organizations utilize to draw people from all walks of life reaching their communities with powerful, life-changing messages of hope and inspiration." ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Matt Bricks Timber of The Power Team performs a signature stunt.

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PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

NMHC hereby publicly discloses that on Monday, January 31, 2021, Ramon B. Camacho dba Camacho Rental, is Mayor-Elect for Municipality of Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, applied for assistance under the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster (CDBG-DR) Affordable Rental Housing Development Program.

Said applicant has been determined to be a member of a group or class of low-income persons intended to be beneficiaries of the assisted activity and is applying to receive generally the same benefits being made available to the group or class. Mr. Ramon B. Camacho is not and shall not be involved in the handling of this loan application.

NMHC discloses this possible conflict pursuant to 24 CFR § 92.356 in order to allow any interested persons to comment before the application is considered for an exception under the applicable conflict regulations.

Any comments should be submitted to NMHC on or before Tuesday, February 21, 2023.

Dated this 6th day of February, 2023.

/s/
JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director

NMC adds more NCLEX passers

Guerrero

Lee

Santos

Armea

Northern Marianas College nursing graduates Eric Lee, Shekinah Armea, Elisa Guerrero, and Savannah Santos recently joined the list of students who have passed the challenging National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses, or NCLEX-RN.

The NCLEX-RN exam is the exam nursing graduates in the CNMI have to pass in order to be able to practice nursing. The exam tests the knowledge, skills, and abilities of nursing graduates in order to certify that they are equipped with the capability to apply entry level nursing practices correctly.

"It's great to see more and more NMC nursing graduates pass the challenging NCLEX-RN," said NMC president Galvin Deleon Guerrero, Ed.D. "I congratulate Eric, Shekinah, Elisa, and Savannah on this accomplishment."

NMC Nursing Department chair Rosa Aldan also congratulated the four on their achievements. "Our Nursing team is so proud of their accomplishments in passing the NCLEX-RN Exam," Aldan said. "We commend them on their achievements and expect nothing but great things from them as they begin their professional careers as registered nurses."

Lee, who graduated from NMC's nursing program in 2021, said he developed a passion for nursing while in the program.

"Honestly, when I first started nursing, it was to earn money," Lee said. "However, while taking classes and going to clinicals, I started to develop a passion for nursing and imagined my future self being able to help not only Saipan but the whole world."

He attributes his success with the NCLEX to his family's support and the Kaplan Test Prep provided by the college.

"NMC's Kaplan session was overwhelming at first, but it prepared me mentally on what to expect on the NCLEX," Lee said.

Lee advises others who are planning to take the NCLEX to envision their lives after passing the exam.

"Whether it's partying with your friends or working as a registered nurse along with your colleagues, use that as motivation to study and pass the NCLEX," Lee said.

Armea, who is a 2021 nursing graduate, developed an interest in science and the human body while in her Advanced Placement Biology class in high school.

"My teacher's passion for science was contagious and I caught it," Armea said. "From there I sought out a degree that would fuel that particular interest and I felt a degree in nursing was just the right avenue."

Armea said she was successful with the NCLEX because she always thought of the one person she pursued a nursing degree for.

"[I passed the exam for] someone very important in my life who couldn't pursue their dream to be a nurse and so they opted to support me in my dreams instead," Armea said. "Knowing that, I worked hard to pass for this person. In addition, I kept in mind all the people who have supported me: my God, my parents, my friends, my church, and my youth group."

"NMC's nursing program also armed me with invaluable test-taking skills," Armea added. "All the exams and the days dedicated to taking practice exams helped me learn to conduct myself during the actual test-taking experience."

Like her peers, Armea advises other students planning to take the NCLEX to have a support system and to not let the exam define them.

"Your success or failure is just a part of your journey. It doesn't dictate who you are," Armea said.

Guerrero, who graduated in 2022, developed an interest in the healthcare field after caring for her great-grandparents in high school. Like Lee, she credits her success with the NCLEX-RN to her family.

"My family and friends in Guam and CNMI provided me with the love, patience, and encouragement to not give up," Guerrero said. "[By passing the NCLEX,] I want to show my daughter that with hard work and commitment to whatever goal she has, it can be done and it will be worth it."

According to Guerrero, the Kaplan Test Prep provided by the college helped her prepare for the questions on the exam. She advises other students preparing for the exam to answer 50-75 practice questions a day, and establish a support system.

"Breaks are definitely necessary," Guerrero said. "It seems like a lot of time and effort now, but this is just a temporary sacrifice for an amazing path ahead."

Santos, who graduated from the nursing program in 2022, entered the nursing field because she had a desire to help people in a meaningful way. She attributes her success with the exam to her family, friends, and her experience as a graduate nurse at the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.

In addition, Santos also commended NMC's instructors for preparing her for the exam questions. Her advice for others planning to take the exam is to define their studying style.

"Everyone has different study habits," Santos said. "A suggestion would be to figure out the time that is most convenient for you to study and the study tools you are most comfortable with using. Also if you need a break, then give yourself a break. "

For more information about NMC's nursing program, email Aldan at rosa.aldan@marianas.edu or call 237-6744. ***(NMC)***

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BID
CUC-IFB-23-014

ISLAND WIDE ROAD RESTORATION, SAIPAN

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Island Wide Road Restoration, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

This Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity work consists of excavation, placing of flowable fill and asphalt to restore pavement areas cut by CUC to repair waterlines, sewerlines and customers' water service connections. Payment is only for the items completely installed and accepted by CUC and DPW. The duration of the contract is one year (365 calendar days) from date of award with an option to extend for an additional year if exercised by CUC.

The Bid Package will be emailed, upon receipt of a non-refundable payment from the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check, or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable), after registration at the CUC, Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Dandan, Saipan, between 7:30 AM to 11:30 AM and 12:30 PM to 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **February 6, 2023 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Seven (7) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-23-014, Island Wide Road Restoration"** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on February 28, 2023**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission.

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A Bid Guarantee of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other security acceptable to the Attorney General. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on February 10, 2023** to Manny B. Sablan, Jr., CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email – manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Yvonne C. Ogumoro Acting Water & Wastewater Division Manager – via email yvonne.ogumoro@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician – via email marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-23-016

SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF BACKHOES AND TRENCHER FOR THE ISLANDS OF SAIPAN, TINIAN AND ROTA

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids for the supply and delivery of five (5) backhoes and one (1) trencher for the islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to assist with daily operations for the CUC Water and Wastewater systems.

This project is grant funded from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Department of the Interior Office of Insular Affairs (DOI-OIA).

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked *"CUC-IFB-23-016, Supply and Delivery of Backhoes and Trencher for the Islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota)"* to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on March 7, 2023** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before submission deadline. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification should be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid or supply under the contract. The IFB does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the bid under this request, or to procure or contract for goods. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 24, 2023**, to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email manny.sablan@cucgov.org and Christie Sablan at christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in the said bids, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids submitted shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

2 rescued, search for 3rd continues in seas between Guam, Rota

SANTA RITA, Guam—The U.S. Coast Guard rescued two mariners, and responders are searching for the third missing mariner between Guam and Rota last Thursday, Feb. 9.

The USCGC *Myrtle Hazard* crew rescued two of the three mariners about halfway between Guam and Rota midday after being vectored into the debris field by a Guam Army Air National Guard UH-72 Lakota helicopter crew who found the debris initially.

They were taken aboard the *Myrtle Hazard*, in good condition and uninjured, before being transferred to a Station Apra Harbor 45-foot Response Boat-Medium for further transport to Agana Boat Basin, where they were met by Guam Fire Department personnel.

U.S. COAST GUARD/PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS JASON PAUL

The crew of the USCGC *Myrtle Hazard* (WPC 1139), aboard the cutter's small boat, rescue two mariners from the water about halfway between Guam and Rota midday on Feb. 9, 2023, after being vectored into the debris field by a Guam Army Air National Guard UH-72 Lakota helicopter crew who found the debris initially, before continuing the search for a third missing mariner.

The search is ongoing for the third mariner. The rescued mariners confirmed the vessel sank and reported the third person was alive and with them but became separated from them during the night. The *Myrtle Hazard* crew continues to search. The Station Apra Harbor crew is swapping out for a fresh crew and doing necessary maintenance before returning to the scene. An HC-130 Hercules fixed-wing crew arrived in Guam last Feb. 9 and is in mandatory crew rest. They are scheduled to join the search the morning of Feb. 10.

The three mariners departed Guam aboard a 42-foot vessel, the *Senior Dung*, heading from Guam to Rota on Feb. 8. Anyone with information should call the U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam Joint Rescue Sub-Center at +1 671-355-4824.

Responders involved to date include crews from:

- Guam Fire Department
- Rota Department of Public Safety
- U.S. Navy Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron Two-Five
- Guam Army Air National Guard
- U.S. Air Force
- USCGC Myrtle Hazard
- U.S. Coast Guard Station Apra Harbor - U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia Sector Guam Joint Rescue Sub-center

At 7:30pm on Feb. 8, watchstanders at the FM/SG JSRC received a mayday call over VHF-FM Channel reporting the vessel *Senior Dung* taking on water between Rota and Guam. The master stated there were three people aboard, and the vessel was sinking. Communications were lost while gathering information from the master. Guam Fire Department confirmed seeing the vessel depart Hagåtña Marina earlier in the day.

Watchstanders immediately diverted the USCGC *Myrtle Hazard* from patrol northwest of the scene and directed the launch of a Station Apra Harbor 45-foot Response Boat-Medium rescue boat crew. They requested assistance from Guam Fire Department rescue boat crews and HSC-25 using their MH-60 Knighthawk helicopter. Daylight searches on Feb. 9 include efforts by the U.S. Coast Guard, Guam Army Air National Guard, and HC-130s attached to the U.S. Air Force 36th Airlift Squadron out of Yokota Air Base in Japan in Guam for the Cope North exercises.

Weather on scene is forecast as a northeast wind of 15 to 20 knots with wind waves of 3 to 4 feet and an east swell of 5 to 7 feet. A small craft advisory and a rip current statement are in effect. ***(USCG)***

Multilateral military leaders kick off Cope North 23

By TECH. SGT. JAOTOREY JOHNSON
PACIFIC AIR FORCES PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Distinguished visitors from all over the Indo-Pacific gathered at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam for the kickoff of Cope North 23 last Wednesday, Feb. 8, 2023.

The multilateral training event brought together air forces from Australia, Japan, and the United States, as well as the French Air and Space Force. Among the honorary guests were high-ranking military officials from multiple nations, including Japan Air Self-Defense Force Lt. Gen. Hiroaki Uchikura, Air Defense Command commander, Royal Australian Air Force Group Cpt. Matthew Hetherington, Headquarters Pacific Air Forces liaison officer, U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Paul Birch, 36th Wing commander, and several others.

The goal of the exercise is to improve integration among the participating nations and enhance security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

"What we really want to do is work on interoperability with the U.S. and Japan," said RAAF Group Cpt. Robert Graham, Cope North 23 exercise director. "We utilize a lot of the same equipment, tactics, and procedures, but the subtle differences can be critical. That's why it's important to work on understanding the how and why of each other's operations."

The training will focus on trilateral airborne integration, large-force employment, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Operations will take place at various locations across the Pacific, including the Commonwealth Northern Mariana Islands, Japan, Palau, and Yap in the Federated States of Micronesia.

Over 2,000 service members and 100 aircraft will participate in the exercise, with 1,200 sorties planned across seven islands and 10 airfields.

U.S. AIR FORCE/TECH. SGT. JAO'TOREY JOHNSON

Cope North 23 exercise directors, Japan Air Self-Defense Force Col. Satora Inadome, Royal Australian Air Force Group Captain Robert Graham, and U.S. Air Force Col. Jared Paslay, pose in front of a JASDF C-130H Hercules on the flight line of Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, during a townhall tour Feb. 7, 2023. The exercise directors visited the islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota to speak with community leaders about local needs and concerns, emphasizing the goal of building partnerships prior to Cope North 23.

"It's all about a free and open Indo-Pacific," said U.S. Air Force Col. Jared Paslay, Cope North 23 exercise director. "You've got three key regional partners gathering for training in a very strategically important area to train, and we also have a lot of other countries that will be participating as observers."

Cope North 23 will culminate in a humanitarian assistance and disaster relief event, showcasing the combined ability of the participating nations to respond to any type of disaster in the Indo-Pacific region.

"We have many different focuses for the exercise, and crisis response is a major one," said Graham. "Natural disasters happen every year, so it's always good to work on our friendships and partnerships, knowing no matter what we'll be there for one another."

Established in 1978, Cope North has been held annually at Andersen Air Force Base since 1999 and is the largest multilateral exercise hosted by U.S. Pacific Air Forces.

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Opinion

Hafa Adai!
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EDITORIAL

Unpopular president tells Americans that all is well

President Joe Biden, his approval ratings underwater for most of the past two years, made his case for a second term on Tuesday. It's doubtful he changed many minds.

The 80-year-old Democrat droned on for 73 minutes during his State of the Union address, urging voters to let him "finish the job." He insisted that all is well, that his economic policies have put the nation on a prosperous path.

"Two years ago our economy was reeling," Biden said. "As I stand here tonight, we have created a record 12 million new jobs—more jobs created in two years than any president has ever created in four years. … My economic plan is about investing in places and people that have been forgotten."

Yet the reality on the ground is a bit less rosy, which helps explain why an aggregate examination of polling numbers by FiveThirtyEight shows that a majority of Americans disapprove of the president's job performance. Meanwhile, a recent Associated Press survey finds that only 37 percent of Democrats want Biden to seek a second term.

The president's speech offered little in terms of new legislative proposals, perhaps because the GOP House will be unlikely to rubber stamp them. Instead, Biden repeated a handful of talking points intended to deflect attention from rampant inflation, soaring deficits and mortgage rates that have tripled under his watch.

For instance, the president blamed Russia and the pandemic for the highest inflation in 40 years, again ignoring the role his trillion-dollar stimulus bills played in overheating the economy. He then took credit for a few months of receding inflation, though prices continue to rise well beyond the rate he inherited.

Biden also repeated his misleading claim that he is responsible for the "largest deficit reduction in American history." That was too much for even The New York Times. While the deficit did drop by $1.7 trillion between the fiscal 2020 and 2022, this had little to do with his administration. "In fact," the Times wrote, "much of that decline can be attributed to the expiration of pandemic-era spending, according to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget."

The president gave a nod to bipartisanship and unity, but who believes him? Biden rhetoric has been as incendiary as one would expect in these hyperpartisan times. He has done nothing but demonize his political opponents.

A handful of Republicans didn't help matters by yelling insults during the president's address. Such behavior—just like Nancy Pelosi's juvenile antics—is counterproductive and undignified. The Biden administration's misguided agenda—and the economic fallout it has triggered—presents plenty of opportunity for the GOP to exploit come 2024 without resorting to callow taunts.

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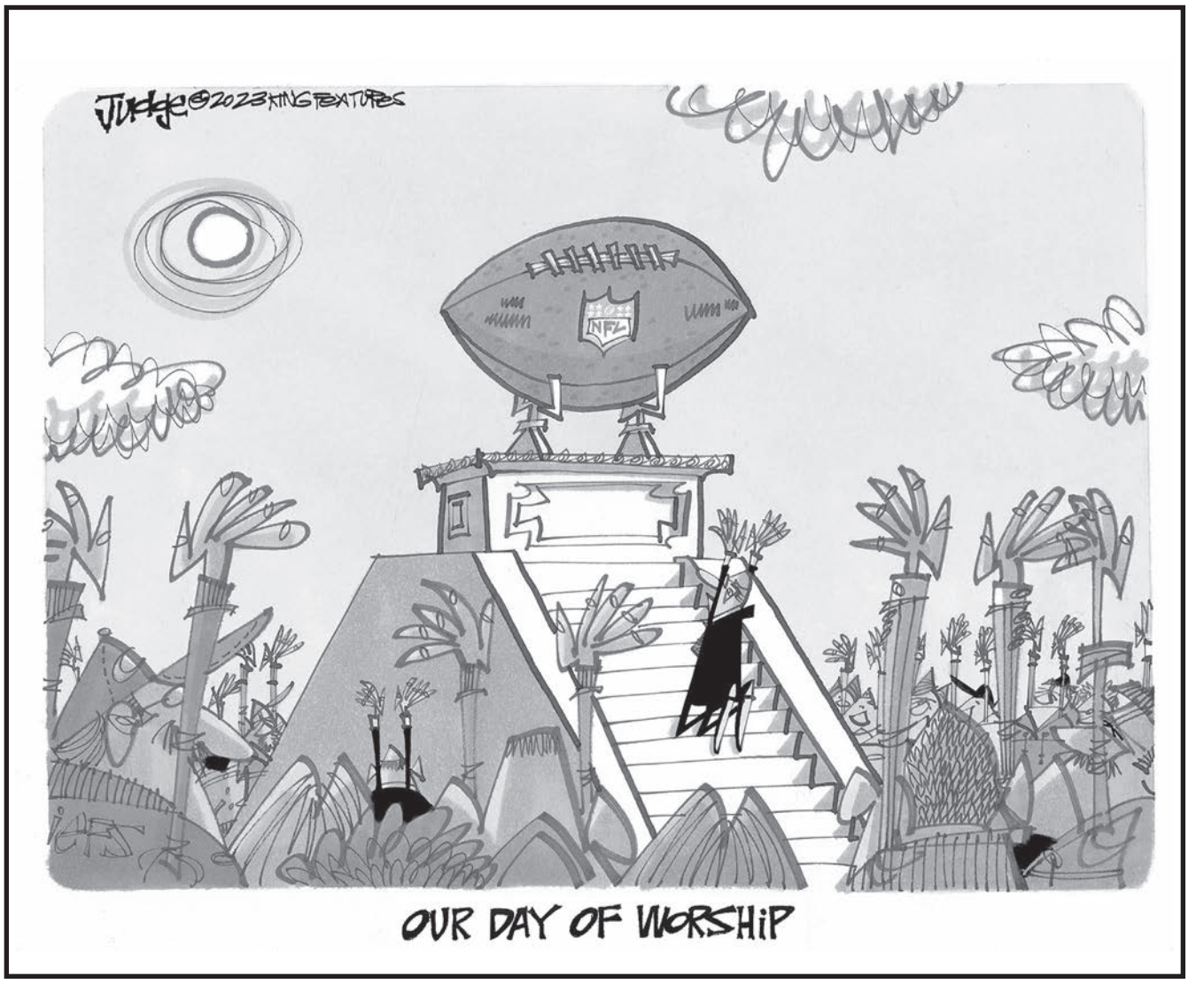


Workers' voices just got stronger—thanks to DHS

By MICHAEL FELSEN
Progressive Perspectives

Michael Felsen concluded a 39-year career as an attorney with the U.S. Department of Labor by serving as New England Regional Solicitor from 2010-2018. He is currently senior advisor with Justice at Work and Strategic Enforcement Advisor with the Workplace Justice Lab at Rutgers University.

Workers across this country just got a big boost, and from an unlikely source: the Department of Homeland Security. How's that?

There are about 11 million unauthorized immigrants in the United States. They're not recent arrivals in this country. A majority of them have been here for a decade or more. Many have families. And they're workers, around 8 million of them, who pick and process the food we eat, cook in our restaurants, care for our elderly and infirm, and build our homes. They help keep our economy running, and they pay billions in taxes. They're integral members of our communities.

And yet, far too many of these workers have been consigned to live in fear. They often find jobs with unscrupulous employers, eager to exploit their undocumented status. They're paid subminimum wages, with no overtime pay; sometimes they don't get paid at all. They're subjected to unsafe conditions, and if they get injured on the job and go to the hospital, they're told to report that they got hurt at home.

All these employer practices are illegal. Workers, whether documented or not, are entitled to the protections that many federal and state laws provide. This keeps the standards uniform for all workers, so employers don't have a special incentive to hire those who are undocumented. But immigrant workers without work authorization stay quiet and endure illegality and abuse, fearing the dreaded "call to ICE" that bad employers threaten to make.

And while undocumented workers suffer, their fellow "legal" workers do, too.They see that asserting rights is perilous. Wages are depressed, safety hazards go unaddressed, organizing for better conditions is stifled. This is bad news for all workers.

Hence, whether workers actually receive the protections the laws promise depends significantly on how the DHS—specifically, Immigration and Customs Enforcement—treats undocumented workers. It's not hard to fathom that when ICE's enforcement policy prioritizes workplace raids aimed at detaining and deporting unauthorized immigrants, as it did under George W. Bush and Donald Trump, worker vulnerability and worker mistreatment are magnified. The culture of fear engendered by such policies is hard to break.

The Obama administration recognized this and ended workplace raids, focusing instead on border apprehensions, removal of immigrants with criminal records and "paper raids" that investigated employers. It also implemented an agreement between its Department of Labor and ICE. Under the agreement, ICE agreed to stay out of DOL's way when it was doing worker protection enforcement and would assess whether tips from employers were intended to retaliate against workers or "otherwise frustrate the enforcement of labor laws."

Obama's efforts to provide some protections for undocumented workers came to a screeching halt when his successor, Trump, effectively declared war on undocumented immigrants. Workplace terror, dampened at least a bit under Obama, returned.

Under Biden, the pendulum has swung again, decisively, in workers' favor. Since day two of his administration, DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas has made clear that undocumented workers aren't in his agency's crosshairs. He's repeated that message multiple times, recognizing the contributions of the millions of undocumented workers "who work on the frontlines in the battle against COVID…teach our children, do back-breaking farm work to help deliver food to our table…." Hence, he pledged to adopt immigration enforcement policies that would support "the important work of the Department of Labor and other government agencies to enforce wage protections, workplace safety, labor rights, and other laws and standards."

True to that commitment, and beginning on Jan. 13, DHS offered a clear means by which undocumented workers who assist a labor investigation could request temporary immigration relief and work authorization. Broad reform of our immigration laws, and a path to citizenship for our millions of unauthorized immigrants, remains a critical need. Nevertheless, with the path that DHS has now provided, undocumented workers and their advocates have notched a huge victory.

As we await further progress toward reform, let's hope we've seen the last swing of this pendulum. For the benefit of all workers—documented or not.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Is China really scarier than Zuckerberg?

By ELIZABETH SHACKELFORD
Chicago Tribune

Elizabeth Shackelford is a senior fellow on U.S. foreign policy with the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. She was previously a U.S. diplomat and is the author of The Dissent Channel: American Diplomacy in a Dishonest Age.

A colleague recently sent me a TikTok she thought I'd find interesting. I clicked the link but immediately regretted it. I quickly cleared my browser history but felt it was too late and that the Chinese government was probably in my phone for good now.

As a former U.S. diplomat, I might be unusually sensitive to that possibility, having served in places where we took for granted that foreign state actors were listening in. But the combination of geopolitical rivalry, China's surveillance state and the viral power of social media does feel potent.

If you're reading this column, you may not be one of the 100 million American users of TikTok, the wildly popular video-sharing social media app that some lawmakers want to ban nationally. About 60% of American TikTok users are under the age of 24, and 76% are younger than 44.

But the debate over TikTok still matters to us all because at its core is the bigger question of how, or whether, our open society can adapt to mitigate the risks of algorithm manipulation and mass hoarding of private data.

TikTok raises specific concerns because of China. It's owned by a Chinese company subject to Chinese national security laws that allow the government to demand its data. There's also the fear that the Chinese state could use the app to spread propaganda and influence its users in ways that harm U.S. democracy and national interests.

After all, foreign adversaries have used social media to sway U.S. public opinion in nefarious ways before. The extreme level of control and influence that the Chinese Communist Party has over Chinese businesses amps up the risk of social media's reach.

In ongoing negotiations with the U.S. government, the company that owns TikTok has proposed elaborate measures to ensure that U.S. user data does not end up in the hands of the Chinese state. But this is happening in such a heated geopolitical atmosphere that the outcome will likely be swayed more by politics than actual risk calculation. However well intended, no security mechanisms proposed by a Chinese company will likely persuade enough political actors that it can be trusted with this level of access to American minds.

Wherever this debate ends up, however, Americans have a bigger question to answer: Why are we so worried about the Chinese government manipulating social media but so nonchalant about Mark Zuckerberg, Elon Musk and other corporate interests doing the same for profit?

It's a question I ask myself frequently. Even as I steer clear of TikTok, I still use Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, though I know the parent companies are using my data and algorithms to try to manipulate my behavior for corporate gain. These businesses determine what news we see, influence what we buy and frequently affect our opinions, views and attitudes in ways of which we aren't even aware.

The risk with TikTok is real, but American social media companies pose real risk, too.

Tools to address that risk butt up against the open society that we treasure. An open society's success has always relied on the idea that we can combat bad information and misinformation with the truth, promoted by facts and better arguments. But the world of algorithms, "alternative facts" and other viral virtual weapons in the hands of bad actors begs the question: Is an open society equipped to handle a technologically advanced war of words and video? Does truth have a fair fight in an open forum today?

This question is a profoundly difficult one for the United States because we prize free speech and openness with an almost cultlike commitment that makes regulation unseemly.

Many governments have no problem banning social media apps to limit the information their citizens can access or cutting off tools that risk revealing alarming truths. Americans find that easy to criticize, but even our European allies, who also value openness, already embrace guard rails on that openness in the interest of privacy and public safety.

What makes us fear the slippery slope of regulating access to information is already emerging in American politics, as the far right clamps down on information in defense of its culture wars. Book bans and political interference in educational curriculum are only degrees away from prohibiting political opposition outright.

The question the government is grappling with today then is what can we do to block misinformation and disinformation that these social media tools spread without impeding the legitimate information people have access to?

I hope our government brings an equal level of scrutiny to all social media apps as it does to those associated with China, but I also hope it pursues regulation with ample oversight, transparency and limitation.

We must take great care with what power we grant the government to limit public access to information and expression. Even if you trust that the government today has the public's best interest at heart, the doors we open now will be open to anyone who ends up in power in the future.

Love Poem in the Year of the Rabbit

LITERARY NOOK

By JOEY CONNOLLY
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Joey aka Pepe Batbon is a retired educator who taught in the CNMI, NOLA, and LVNV. He is a sonnet practitioner who enjoys stargazing.

" … A lone bird sings of love and pain
(Oh heart in sorrow garmented
There's hope while song can hush the rain.)"
—an excerpt from Singing In the Rain *by Countee Cullen, 1923*

Banana Leaf Rain Song

Strong steady winds blow through big banana trees
increasing islanders 'the typhoons coming' fears
big rain drops play soft pitter patter symphonies
beating time with thoughts of former typhoon tears

When some bad ones hit their time over us was brief
a path across the reef out to the Philippine Sea they led
still crop damage caused farmers and ranchers grief
some homes were destroyed but no one was dead

Along the beach chungé bird pairs on the look out
banana leaves now compose a more restless tune
in the boonies unknown birds sing and fly about
underneath dark skies comes a daytime rising moon

As typhoon rains buffet the houses' window panes
I sing with birds and banana leaves to hush the rains.

Want to stem the tide of teachers fleeing the classroom? Empower them to lead

By DANIEL B. COUPLAND
Chicago Tribune

Daniel B. Coupland is dean of the Graduate School of Classical Education, chairman of the education department, and a professor of education at Hillsdale College in Michigan. He is the author of Tried & True: A Primer on Sound Pedagogy.

A 2022 survey of 615 Midwestern K-12 teachers who left the profession cited poor student behavior as the No. 1 reason for their departure.

Fifty-one percent of the surveyed teachers listed "behavior" as the primary reason for quitting—more than progressive political activity, insufficient salary, parental concerns with their classroom, COVID-19 policies, safety concerns about school shootings, lack of materials to teach effectively, standardized testing, licensure expiration, or professional development requirements combined.

Such a lopsided result is not entirely unexpected. Behavioral issues can easily prevent teachers from doing their primary job—educating the hearts and minds of their students. And so, maintaining a healthy, productive classroom environment is critical to the overall success of the school. And rising levels of student misbehavior should concern all who want to see our children receive the best education possible.

Some factors that influence student behavior in the classroom are beyond the control of most teachers. They range from the minuscule and forgettable to the massive and foreboding—the weather and the time of day, students' friendships and home life, limited space and proper lighting, health concerns and learning difficulties.

That said, time-tested practices of classroom management can help teachers overcome many of these limitations, minimize disruptive behavior in classrooms, and ultimately provide a rich and effective learning environment for students. Establishing useful routines for classroom activities, creating an effective system of rules for behavior and enforcing those rules fairly, and including parents through regular communication are a few examples of such practices. These are effective because they provide a structure within the classroom in which students can learn.

If teachers are unwilling or unable to provide boundaries in the classroom, students will go as far as they see no limits. With the student misbehavior and the resulting classroom chaos, it's no wonder many educators become frustrated with their work and leave the profession. To stem this tide, educators must be given the authority to make important and strategic management decisions in their classrooms to create and maintain healthy, well-ordered environments for learning. In other words, they must be empowered to lead.

Of course, certain obligations come with this kind of authority. The teacher's knowledge and character must be superior to that of the students. This doesn't mean that teachers must be omniscient and morally perfect—students know this is impossible. But teachers should know on the whole more than the students about the content of the courses they're teaching. Similarly, they should demonstrate on the whole much higher moral character than the students due to their education, experience and maturity.

When teachers don't know something, they should admit it and offer a plan for finding out the answer. When they fail to live up to high moral standards, they should demonstrate the appropriate way of accepting responsibility for their behavior, dealing with any impact of their moral failure and restoring any relationships they may have damaged. This is what good leadership looks like.

Additionally, teachers must lead their classrooms within the larger context of the school. Teachers cannot simply govern their classrooms however they see fit—as if they were unaccountable dictators. This means a teacher's authority must function within the leadership structure of the school, which includes administrators, school boards and parents.

Finally, teachers' leadership in the classroom must be aligned with the school's overall mission. The school's mission is its North Star to which all community members can and should orient their behavior and work. It defines what the school is, what it does and why it does it. The school's mission should drive all activities related to the school—including how teachers manage their classrooms.

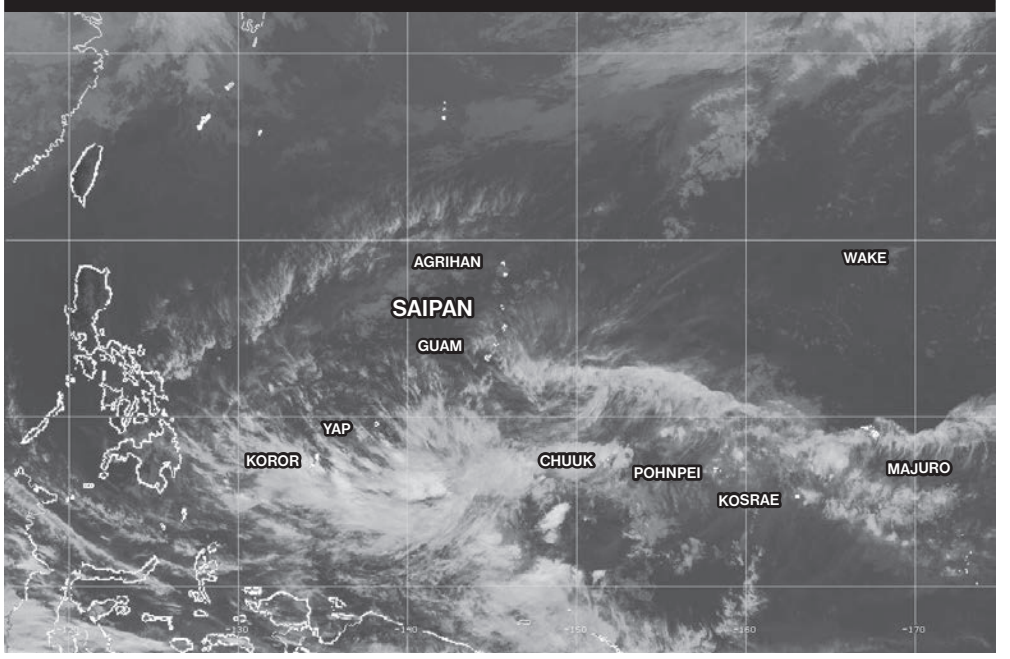
Effective classroom management based on sound principles isn't a cure-all for all that ails American education. But empowering teachers to manage their classrooms by means of time-tested practices may be a key element to more well-ordered and effective classrooms. And it may also encourage good, experienced teachers to remain in the classroom rather than exit the profession for other work or an early retirement.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Isolated showers. Mostly sunny	Isolated showers. Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny
86º / 76º	86º / 76º	87º / 76º	87º / 78º	86º / 78º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:24 AM, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2023

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Guam Doppler weather radar shows isolated showers moving through the Marianas Waters. The buoys reveal combined seas of 6 to 8 feet, made up of a large east swell, a small north swell, and medium size wind waves on top.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Thunderstorms	87° / 77°
Palau	Thunderstorms	82° / 75°
Yap	Showers	86° / 79°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	86° / 80°
Pohnpei	Showers	85° / 78°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms/Wind	84° / 80°
Majuro	Scattered Thunderstorms	84° / 79°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:42 AM	6:19 PM
Tuesday	6:42 AM	6:20 PM
Wednesday	6:41 AM	6:20 PM
Thursday	6:41 AM	6:20 PM
Friday	6:40 AM	6:21 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	11:20 AM	-
Tuesday	12:31 AM	12:06 PM	-
Wednesday	1:31 AM	12:58 PM	-
Thursday	2:34 AM	1:57 PM	-
Friday	3:39 AM	3:02 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Rain/Wind	67° / 64°
Beijing	Sunny	43° / 25°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	75° / 60°
Honolulu	Showers	82° / 73°
London	Sunny	43° / 34°
Los Angeles	Sunny	73° / 53°
Manila	Mostly Sunny	93° / 70°
Melbourne	Rain	66° / 55°
Miami	Mostly Sunny	78° / 71°
New York	Cloudy	49° / 39°
Osaka	Sunny	52° / 39°
Paris	Partly Cloudy	39° / 28°
Busan	Mostly Sunny	48° / 36°
Rome	Mostly Sunny	55° / 39°
Salem	Partly Cloudy	70° / 54°
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	59° / 48°
Seoul	Mostly Cloudy	50° / 25°
Tokyo	Rain	50° / 38°
Washington, DC	Rain	43° / 38°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
12:41 AM	High Tide	1.29
6:07 AM	Low Tide	0.78
12:09 PM	High Tide	1.65
7:35 PM	Low Tide	0.12

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2023

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:30AM	7:25AM	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	8:00PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA117/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau
OZ624/701	3:50PM	10:35AM+1	3,6 via Incheon

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	3:15AM	6:55AM	1, 4, 5, 7
TW9308	3:50AM	7:20AM	1, 4, 5, 7
OZ624	3:50PM	7:40PM	3, 6
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:46AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA189	12:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	12:40AM	8:46AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:46AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:46AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
OZ704/623	11:50PM	2:20PM+1	2, 5 via Incheon

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ623	9:00AM	2:20PM	3, 6
7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	8:45PM	2:15AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7
TW9307	9:20PM	2:50AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

MARIANAS SOUTHERN AIRWAYS

INITIAL DAILY FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 13, 2023

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
11:20 A.M.	11:38 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
3:40 P.M.	3:58 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
9:40 A.M.	9:58 A.M.	6,7

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
12:00 P.M.	12:18 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
4:20 P.M.	4:38 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
10:20 A.M.	10:38 A.M.	6,7

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:20 A.M.	8:00 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
5:00 P.M.	5:40 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
7:40 A.M.	8:20 A.M.	6,7

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
10:20 A.M.	11:00 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
6:00 P.M.	6:40 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
8:40 A.M.	9:20 A.M.	6,7

SAIPAN TO GUAM

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
12:00 P.M.	1:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2:00 P.M.	3:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
7:00 P.M.	8:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
11:00 A.M.	12:00 P.M.	6,7

GUAM TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1:30 P.M.	2:30 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
5:30 P.M.	6:30 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
9:00 P.M.	10:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
12:30 P.M.	1:30 P.M.	6,7

ROTA TO GUAM

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
8:20 A.M.	8:55 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
4:25 P.M.	5:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

GUAM TO ROTA

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
9:25 A.M.	10:00 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
3:30 P.M.	4:05 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7)

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JUNE 1, 2022

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30	9:00	Daily
1302	11:00	11:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
1302	12:00	12:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
1303	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	13:00	13:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
3102	14:00	14:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
3103	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

LIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	12:00	12:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily

19th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival on Feb. 18-19

A full weekend of games and competitions are set for the 19th Tinian Hot Pepper Festival on Feb. 18-19, 2023, in the Marianas. The festival, affectionately known as "Pika Fest" among locals ("pika" means spicy), pays homage to Tinian's small but famous "donni' sali" hot pepper. Activities will include food sales, live entertainment, competitions, arts, and crafts sales, and more.

"Since the creation of the Tinian Hot Pepper Festival by former Marianas Visitors Authority director Ellen Ikehara, it has become one of Tinian's most popular events every year. We hope that this year's festival will bring our people together and guests from abroad to visit our beautiful island of Tinian," said Tinian Mayor Edwin Aldan. "On behalf of the people of Tinian and the Tinian and Aguiguan Leadership, I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to all of the 19th Tinian Hot Pepper Festival sponsors. The festival plans and activities could not have been possible without your generous contributions and support. Thank you, *si yu'us ma'ase*, and don't forget to visit Tinian during the Pika Festival weekend."

The festival will be held into the evening on both days, with the opening ceremony at 7pm on Friday, Feb. 17. Activities and games on Feb. 18 and 19 will begin at 10am and continue through the late afternoon. The event is organized this year by the Office of the Mayor of Tinian and Aguiguan with support from the MVA and will once again be held at the Fiesta Grounds in San Jose, Tinian, adjacent to the picturesque Jones Beach and House of Taga, a U.S. National Historic Landmark featuring limestone monoliths carved by ancient Chamorros.

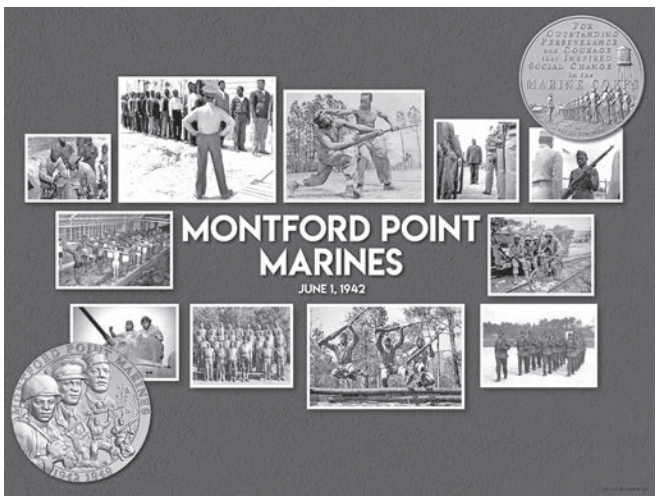
Hotel accommodations are available at Tinian Ocean View, Lorilynn's Hotel, Tinian Street Motel, Fleming Hotel, Green Lion House Hotel, and the Marpo Valley Inn. Free camping is available at Jones Beach, Taga Beach (toilets, barbecue pits, and outdoor showers available) and at the adjacent Tachogna Beach (barbecue pits, indoor showers, and toilets are available).

For more information, contact Mayor of Tinian event planning coordinator Dorthy San Nicolas at (670) 433-1800/02 or via email at 2mot.externalaffairs@gmail.com. ***(MVA)***

Taotao Taga Tinian Cultural Dancers perform on opening night at the 18th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival held on March 11-13, 2022, in San Jose Village, Tinian. The event is organized this year by the Tinian Mayor's Office with support from the Marianas Visitors Authority and will return on Feb. 18-19, 2023. MVA

COMMUNITY FILM EVENT

AMP to screen doc on 1st Black Marines



U.S. MARINE CORPS GRAPHIC/LANCE CPL. LESLIE ALCARAZ

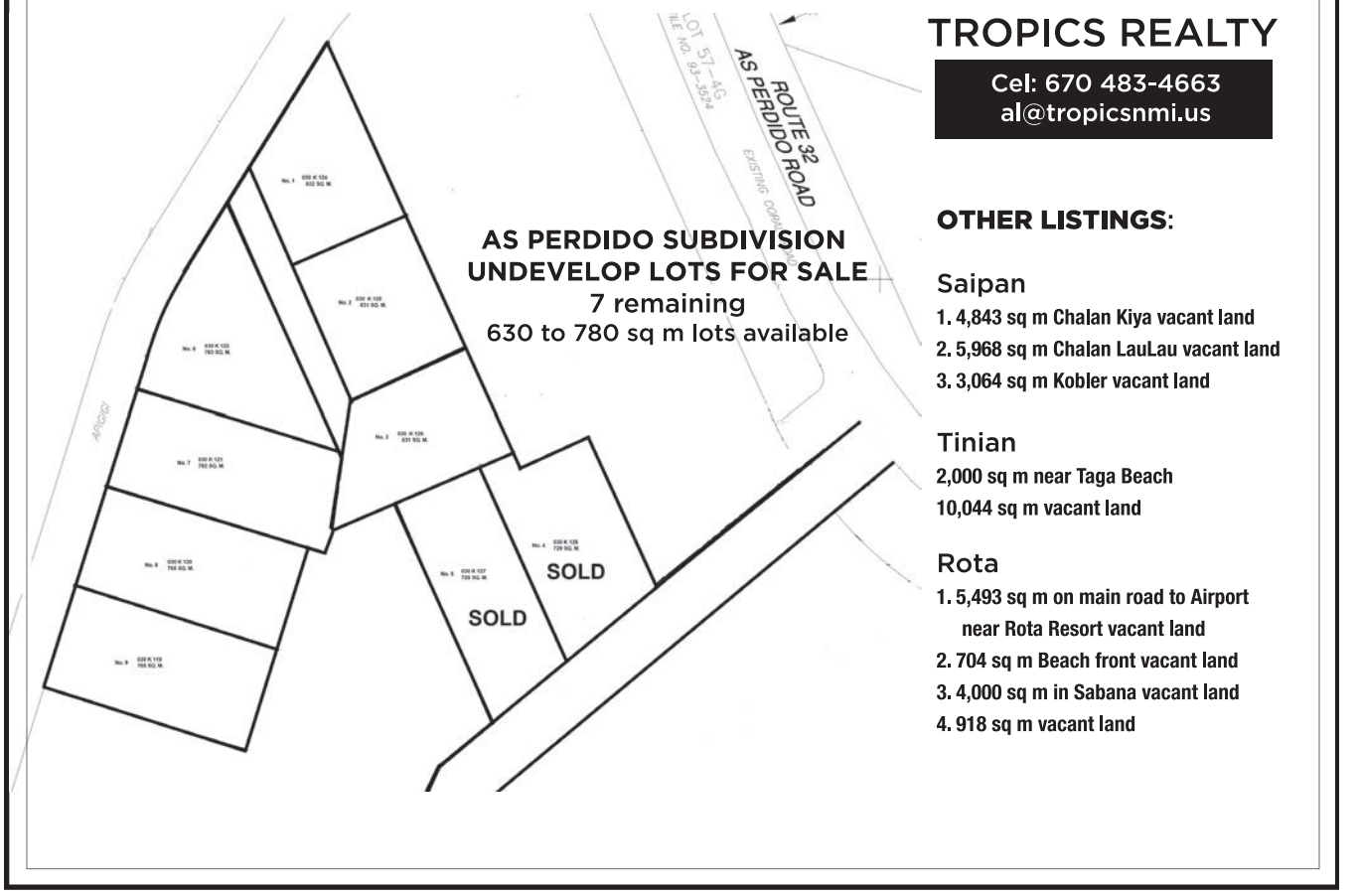
Graphic illustration created to honor the Montford Point Marines during the annual observance of Black History Month on Jan. 29, 2021, at Marine Corps Support Facility New Orleans.

In honor of the first Black Marine recruits and in recognition of Black History Month, American Memorial Park will be showing the documentary film, *The Marines of Montford Point: Fighting for Freedom*. The film includes interviews of veterans who trained at Montford Point and served during World War II. The film will show at the park theater on Feb. 17 at 6pm. The event is free and all are welcome.

By the end of World War II some 13,000 Montford Point Marines have been deployed overseas to the Pacific, including Saipan, Guam, Peleliu, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa.

This documentary tells the story of the first Black Marine recruits trained at a segregated training facility called Montford Point. On June 15, 1941 President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802. E.O. 8802 states that "there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in the defense industries of Government because of race, creed, color, or national origin..." While this executive order did not ban segregation in the United States military, it did open positions to many Americans who had been kept out until then.

In 1942 the first Black Marine recruits trained at Montford Point. These Marines were trained for anti-aircraft defense battalions as well as supply and logistical roles. ***(PR/Saipan Tribune)***


ROUTE 32
AS PERDIDO ROAD
AS PERDIDO SUBDIVISION
UNDEVELOP LOTS FOR SALE
7 remaining
630 to 780 sq m lots available
SOLD
SOLD
TROPICS REALTY
Cel: 670 483-4663
al@tropicsnmi.us
OTHER LISTINGS:
Saipan
1. 4,843 sq m Chalan Kiya vacant land
2. 5,968 sq m Chalan LauLau vacant land
3. 3,064 sq m Kobler vacant land
Tinian
2,000 sq m near Taga Beach
10,044 sq m vacant land
Rota
1. 5,493 sq m on main road to Airport near Rota Resort vacant land
2. 704 sq m Beach front vacant land
3. 4,000 sq m in Sabana vacant land
4. 918 sq m vacant land

GUAM & COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
WEBEX MEETING FEBRUARY 14, 2023

U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs
Honolulu Regional Office - Public Contact Team

Will host a Virtual Benefits Workshop for Veterans, Family Members, Surviving Spouses, and Community Providers
on
TUESDAY FEBRUARY 14, 2023

From
4PM-6PM (GUAM & CNMI LOCAL TIME)

To participate please join us in Cisco Webex by clicking or copying and pasting the below links into your browser:

https://veteransaffairs.webex.com/veteransaffairs/j.php?MTID=m590de697f6e4cb04d4c6c0702d400abb

You can join via Computer, Phone Audio (1-833-558-0712, Access Code:27613445613##), or Webex Mobile App. Meeting Password: pZzGAHB@375

Benefits Workshop Topics:
Compensation, Service Connection, Pension, Homeless, COD, MST, Women Veterans, Education & Training, Veteran Readiness & Employment, PACT Act, Home Loan Guaranty, DIC, Survivors' Pension, & Burial and Plot Internment Allowance

Business

Big Game watch party at Crowne's Mari Bar

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan's Mari Bara is offering a delicious breakfast and lunch buffet package for its Super Bowl Super Bowl LVII watch party today from 7:30am to 1:30pm for $39 per person.

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan's Mari Bar is ready for gridiron fans as the Kansas City Chiefs take on the Philadelphia Eagles in Super Bowl LVII today.

As you cheer and root for your favorite team together with millions of fans connected through the power of strong internet connection and the love for the game, you are sure to work up an appetite—so stuff yourself throughout the day with a delicious breakfast and lunch buffet package from 7:30am to 1:30pm for $39 per person.

Make your way to the bar with an empty stomach and down their breakfast menu from 8am to 10am which includes assorted danish pastries, plain croissant, eggs benedict, hash browns, orange wedges, and beverages including coffee, tea, water and juice bar: orange, apple and pineapple.

Come lunch time, you are sure to be famished once again from the excitement and suspense of the game, so from 11am to 1pm, replenish your energy at the Mari Bar's outdoor buffet with mouthwatering selections of smoky pulled pork burger, Nathan's hotdog with smoked ranch, buffalo, garlic soy sauce creamy coleslaw, potato chips, salted caramel brownies, Bomboloni, lemon custard, and water.

Other drinks available on the menu with a special offer 25% discount for the entire game from 7:30am to 1:30pm.

Reserve your table and call +1-670-234-6414 or book online https://www.tablecheck.com/en/crowneplaza-saipan-mari-bar/reserve/message

Twenty-one-years-old and younger are not permitted inside the bar.

IRS won't tax most relief payments made by states last year

By DAVID SHARP
ASSOCIATED PRESS

The IRS announced Friday that most relief checks issued by states last year aren't subject to federal taxes, providing 11th hour guidance as tax returns start to pour in.

A week after telling payment recipients to delay filing returns, the IRS said it won't challenge the taxability of payments related to general welfare and disaster, meaning taxpayers who received those checks won't have to pay federal taxes on those payments. All told, the IRS said special payments were made by 21 states in 2022.

"The IRS appreciates the patience of taxpayers, tax professionals, software companies and state tax administrators as the IRS and Treasury worked to resolve this unique and complex situation," the IRS said Friday evening in a statement.

The states where the relief checks do not have to be reported by taxpayers are California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island. That also applies to energy relief payments in Alaska that were in addition to the annual Permanent Fund Dividend, the IRS said.

In addition, many taxpayers in Georgia, Massachusetts, South Carolina and Virginia also avoid federal taxes on state payments if they meet certain requirements, the IRS said.

In California, most residents got a "middle class tax refund" last year, a payment of up to $1,050 depending on their income, filing status and whether they had children. The Democratic-controlled state Legislature approved the payments to help offset record high gas prices, which peaked at a high of $6.44 per gallon in June according to AAA.

A key question was whether the federal government would count those payments as income and require Californians to pay taxes on it. Many California taxpayers had delayed filing their 2022 returns while waiting for an answer. Friday, the IRS said it would not tax the refund.

Maine was another example of states where the IRS stance had created confusion. More than 100,000 tax returns already had been filed as of Thursday, many of them submitted before the IRS urged residents to delay filing their returns.

Democratic Gov. Janet Mills pressed for the $850 pandemic relief checks last year for most Mainers to help make ends meet as a budget surplus ballooned.

Nation

US: China balloon could collect intelligence signals

WASHINGTON (AP)— The China balloon shot down by the U.S. was equipped to detect and collect intelligence signals as part of a huge, military-linked aerial surveillance program that targeted more than 40 countries, the Biden administration declared Thursday, citing imagery from American U-2 spy planes.

A fleet of balloons operates under the direction of the People's Liberation Army and is used specifically for spying, outfitted with high-tech equipment designed to gather sensitive information from targets across the globe, the U.S. said. Similar balloons have sailed over five continents, according to the administration.

A statement from a senior State Department official offered the most detail to date linking China's military to the balloon that was shot down by the U.S. last weekend over the Atlantic Ocean. The public details outlining the program's scope and capabilities were meant to refute China's persistent denials that the balloon was used for spying, including a claim Thursday that U.S. accusations about the balloon amount to "information warfare."

President Joe Biden defended the U.S. action.

And, asked in an interview with Spanish language Telemundo Noticias whether the balloon episode represented a major security breach, he said no.

"Look, the total amount of intelligence gathering that's going on by every country around the world is overwhelming," he said. "Anyway, it's not a major breach. I mean, look ... it's a violation of international law. It's our airspace. And once it comes into our space, we can do what we want with it."

On Capitol Hill, the House voted unanimously to condemn China for a "brazen violation" of U.S. sovereignty and efforts to "deceive the international community through false claims about its intelligence collection campaigns." Republicans have criticized Biden for not acting sooner to down the balloon, but both parties' lawmakers came together on the vote, 419-0.

In Beijing, before the U.S. offered its new information, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning repeated her nation's insistence that the large unmanned balloon was a civilian meteorological airship that had blown off course and that the U.S. had "overreacted" by shooting it down.

"It is irresponsible," Mao said. The latest accusations, she said, "may be part of the U.S. side's information warfare against China."

Underscoring the tensions, China's defense minister refused to take a phone call from Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to discuss the balloon issue on Saturday, the Pentagon said. Secretary of State Antony Blinken canceled a planned weekend trip to Beijing.

The U.S. flatly contradicted China's version of events, saying that imagery of the balloon collected by American U-2 spy planes as it crossed the country showed that it was "capable of conducting signals intelligence collection" with multiple antennas and other equipment designed to upload sensitive information and solar panels to power them.

Jedidiah Royal, the U.S. assistant defense secretary for the Indo-Pacific, told a Senate Appropriations subcommittee that the military has "some very good guesses" about what intelligence China was seeking. More information was expected to be provided in a classified setting.

Biden hosts GOP, Dem governors at White House for dinner

WASHINGTON (AP)— President Joe Biden, hosting both Republican and Democratic governors for a black-tie affair at the White House, raised his glass for a toast.

Standing under a portrait of Abraham Lincoln, he told the people in the room to remember who they were. "We're the United States of America. We can get big things done if we do it together."

"Cheers!" the crowd replied, as the clink-clink of glasses rippled about the State Dining Room.

Biden hosted the dinner for members of the National Governors Association at the White House for the first time in his administration. It's usually a tradition, but the dinner was held last year at Mount Vernon, George Washington's Virginia estate, and virtually in 2021 because of COVID-19.

The dinner came as federal leaders seemed as divided as ever with the new Republican majority in the House courting a risky debt ceiling showdown.

On Saturday at the White House, though, the message was togetherness — and not just because the room was tightly packed with governors, spouses and Cabinet members. Biden and both associations' leaders, Republican Gov. Spencer Cox of Utah and Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy of New Jersey, spoke about the need to put aside the increasingly rancorous political differences in order to work together to better the nation.

"I think when we work together it works," Biden said, adding he'd work to be a little more bipartisan and praised the work of the governors.

The tables were set with purple velvet tablecloths (wink wink on bipartisanship), china bearing the presidential seal and large floral centerpieces in white and pink.

Cabinet members were mixed together with governors in ball gowns, tuxedos and sparkles. Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer sat near Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo. Maryland Gov. Wes Moore and New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, both Democrats, sat near Vice President Kamala Harris. Not far away were Republican Govs. Bill Lee of Tennessee and Doug Burgum of North Dakota.

First lady Jill Biden held a service project event earlier Saturday for spouses, but she had to skip a Friday event because she wasn't feeling well. She tested negative for COVID-19.

Biden, who does not drink, gave the toast with his left hand, explaining he'd been told by his grandfather that that's just what you did when you don't have alcohol in the glass. Cox, who also doesn't drink, did the same when he toasted, telling the room it was ginger ale.

"It's symbolic to have Republicans and Democrats breaking bread together," Cox said. "This is what is missing."

"And I believe that the people of our country, at least the exhausted majority, wants us to be doing more of this."

Cox thanked Biden and the first lady before introducing Murphy, who joked that he was definitely holding his glass in his right hand. He said their party affiliations were less important than the shared moniker of "Americans."

Asia

‘It just rang’: US-China hotline goes unanswered

AP

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin speaks during a meeting with Albanian Defense Minister Niko Peleshi at the Pentagon, Jan. 26, 2023, in Washington.

WASHINGTON (AP)—Within hours of an Air Force F-22 downing a giant Chinese balloon that had crossed the United States, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin reached out to his Chinese counterpart via a special crisis line, aiming for a quick general-to-general talk that could explain things and ease tensions.

But Austin’s effort Saturday fell flat, when Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe declined to get on the line, the Pentagon says.

China’s Defense Ministry says it refused the call from Austin after the balloon was shot down because the U.S. had “not created the proper atmosphere” for dialogue and exchange. The U.S. action had “seriously violated international norms and set a pernicious precedent,” a ministry spokesperson was quoted as saying in a statement issued late Thursday.

It’s been an experience that’s frustrated U.S. commanders for decades, when it comes to getting their Chinese counterparts on a phone or video line as some flaring crisis is sending tensions between the two nations climbing.

From Americans’ perspective, the lack of the kind of reliable crisis communications that helped get the U.S. and Soviet Union through the Cold War without an armed nuclear exchange is raising the dangers of the U.S.-China relationship now, at a time when China’s military strength is growing and tensions with the U.S. are on the rise.

Without that ability for generals in opposing capitals to clear things up in a hurry, Americans worry that misunderstandings, false reports or accidental collisions could cause a minor confrontation to spiral into greater hostilities.

And it’s not about any technical shortfall with the communication equipment, said Bonnie Glaser, managing director of Indo-Pacific studies at the German Marshall Fund think tank. The issue is a fundamental difference in the way China and the U.S. view the value and purpose of military-to-military hotlines.

U.S. military leaders’ faith in Washington-to-Beijing hotlines as a way to defuse flare-ups with China’s military has been butting up against a sharply different take — a Chinese political system that runs on slow deliberative consultation by political leaders and makes no room for individually directed, real-time talk between rival generals.

And Chinese leaders are suspicious of the whole U.S. notion of a hotline — seeing it as an American channel for trying to talk their way out of repercussions for a U.S. provocation.

“That’s really dangerous,” Assistant Secretary for Defense Ely Ratner said Thursday of the difficulty of military-to-military crisis communications with China, when Democratic Sen. Jeff Merkley pressed him about China’s latest rebuff on Beijing’s and Washington’s hotline setup.

U.S. generals are persisting in their efforts to open more lines of communication with Chinese counterparts, the defense official said, testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. “And unfortunately, to date, the PLA is not answering that call,” Ratner said, referring to China’s People’s Liberation Army.

Ratner accused China of using vital channels of communication simply as a blunter messaging tool, shutting them down or opening them up again to underscore China’s displeasure or pleasure with the U.S.

China’s resistance to military hotlines as tensions increase puts more urgency on efforts by President Joe Biden and his top civilian diplomats and security aides to build up their own communication channels with President Xi Jinping and other top Chinese political officials, for situations where military hotlines may go unanswered, U.S. officials and China experts say.

Both U.S. and Chinese militaries are building up for a possible confrontation over U.S.-backed self-ruled Taiwan, which China claims as its territory. The next flare-up seems only a matter of time. It could happen with an expected event, such as House Speaker Kevin McCarthy’s promised visit to Taiwan, or something unexpected, like the 2001 collision between a Chinese fighter and a U.S. Navy EP-3 reconnaissance plane over the South China Sea. Without commanders talking in real-time, Americans and Chinese would have one less way of averting greater conflict..

“My worry is that the EP-3 type incident will happen again,” said Lyle Morris, a country director for China for the Office of the Secretary of Defense from 2019 to 2021, now a senior fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute. “And we will be in much different political environments of hostility and mistrust, where that could go wrong in a hurry.”

World

WORLD BRIEFS

Fundraisers for Syria, Turkey earthquake try to deliver aid

NEW YORK (AP)—Humanitarian groups working in southern Turkey and northwest Syria warn that Monday’s earthquake will have a “long tail”—a wide range of needs that will require donations for months, or even years, after the rescue and recovery missions end. Among the worst in recent history, the 7.8 magnitude earthquake has killed at least 23,200 in the region and left tens of thousands more homeless, with thousands taking refuge in shopping malls, stadiums, mosques and community centers. Humanitarian access to northern Syria is complicated by the civil war, while sending funds can be blocked or slowed by U.S. sanctions, despite an exemption for relief efforts. The political environment in Turkey also poses challenges. The first shipment of earthquake-related aid crossed from Turkey into Syria’s rebel-held enclave on Friday, a painful delay caused by damage and debris but also a U.N. policy that allows only for the use of a single crossing. However, some aid groups were already in place because of the country’s 12-year civil war. Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) had 500 staff, two of whom were among those killed, stationed in northern Syria, where they’ve helped meet medical needs amid the conflict. “We were able to do a massive distribution of food and blankets to more than 500 families,” from one of their warehouses in the immediate aftermath of the quake, said Avril Benoît, executive director for MSF USA. Her organization keeps emergency supplies on hand in the case of major disasters. “There’s a long tail to an emergency like this, both for the injured from the earthquake, but also for chronic disease management, making sure they have access to their medications,” Benoît said. People will die without access to medications to control chronic illnesses such as hypertension and diabetes, she said, adding that the earthquake will also take a mental toll. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said they had 5,200 volunteers mobilized on both sides of the border, with the Turkish operation being more robust and better-equipped because of its longstanding program to support Syrian refugees. The IFRC’s Syrian chapter works in areas controlled by the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, which has been sanctioned by the U.S. and European countries. In the past year, little humanitarian aid has arrived from Damascus to the opposition-held north, which has suffered an outbreak of cholera and COVID-19 amid desperate living conditions for many.

UN draft resolution: Any peace must keep Ukraine intact

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—Ukraine’s supporters have circulated a proposed resolution for adoption by the 193-member U.N. General Assembly on the eve of the first anniversary of Russia’s invasion of its smaller neighbor that would underscore the need for peace ensuring Ukraine’s “sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity.” The draft, obtained Friday by The Associated Press, is entitled “Principles underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine.” The proposed resolution is broader and less detailed than the 10-point peace plan that Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced at the November summit of the Group of 20 major economies. This was a deliberate decision by Ukraine and its backers to try to gain maximum support when it is put to a vote, U.N. diplomats said, speaking on condition of anonymity because discussions have been private. General Assembly spokesperson Paulina Kubiak said Friday that a reactivated emergency session of the General Assembly on Ukraine will start on the afternoon of Feb. 22. Dozens of speeches are expected to continue through most of Feb. 23 and the vote is expected late that day.

Bolsonaro says he may return to Brazil in the coming weeks

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP)—Former President Jair Bolsonaro said Saturday he intends to return to Brazil “in the following weeks.” The comment during an event at an evangelical church in Florida was the first time that Bolsonaro has made a statement in public about returning home. The far-right politician has been in the U.S. since arriving in Orlando, Florida, on Dec. 31, the eve of the inauguration of his leftist rival, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, as Brazil’s current president. Saturday’s event was held entirely in Portuguese for a Brazilian crowd of Bolsonaro supporters living abroad and was organized by the right-wing organization Yes Brazil USA. Bolsonaro was cheered throughout the event. There has been speculation during recent weeks on when Bolsonaro might return to Brazil, where is the subject of several investigations into possible wrongdoing. He initially entered the U.S. on a one-month diplomatic visa, which ended Jan. 31. He was accompanied by a team of presidential advisers and his wife, all of whom left Florida last month. Lawyers for Bolsonaro told Brazilian media recently that they applied for a tourist visa to extend his stay in the U.S.

Trudeau: US fighter shot down object over northern Canada

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP)—Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Saturday that on his order a U.S. fighter jet shot down an “unidentified object” that was flying high over the Yukon, acting a day after the U.S. took similar action over Alaska. North American Aerospace Defense Command, the combined U.S.-Canada organization that provides shared defense of airspace over the two nations, detected the object flying at a high altitude Friday evening over Alaska, U.S. officials said. It crossed into Canadian airspace on Saturday. Trudeau spoke with President Joe Biden, who also ordered the object to be shot down. Canadian and U.S. jets operating as part of NORAD were scrambled and it was a U.S. jet that shot down the object. Canadian Defense Minister Anita Anand told a news conference in Ottawa that the object, flying at around 40,000 feet, had been shot down at 3:41 p.m. EST, approximately 100 miles from the Canada-U.S. border in the central Yukon. A recovery operation was underway involving the Canadian Armed Forces and the RCMP. Hours later, in the U.S., the Federal Aviation Administration said Saturday night it had closed some airspace in Montana to support Defense Department activities. NORAD later said the closure, which lasted a little more than an hour, came after it had detected “a radar anomaly” and sent fighter aircraft to investigate. The aircraft did not identify any object to correlate to the radar hits, NORAD said.

Health & Fitness

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9 common questions about genetic testing for cancer

By Dan Lea
MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Genetic testing can help you and your health care team understand if you have an increased risk for developing certain conditions that are present in your family.

EAU CLAIRE, Wis.—Your genes play a role in nearly all areas of your health. A gene is like an instruction manual for your body that tells your body how to function, develop and stay healthy. People have about 20,000 genes in their bodies.

"Many health conditions have a genetic link," says Breanna Mitchell, a genetic counselor at Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire. "Genetic testing can help you and your health care team understand if you have an increased risk for developing certain conditions that are present in your family. If you are at risk, you may be able to take preventive measures to decrease your risk or undergo genetic testing to clarify your risk."

Here are nine common questions about genetic testing:

1 Do all types of cancers have a genetic component?

Most cancers are considered sporadic, meaning the cancer happens randomly or has environmental influences, such as smoking and lung cancer. About 25% of cancers are considered familial. This is when multiple members of a family are affected by cancer. These family members have some shared genetic factors in combination with shared environmental factors that lead to the development of these cancers.

"About 10% of cancers are considered hereditary or have a single specific genetic component that can be tested and increase a person's risk for developing cancer," Mitchell says. "Genetic counseling and genetic testing can help determine which category a person's individual or family cancer falls into. It also can help estimate your risk for developing cancer."

2 What types of genes are examined during genetic testing?

You may have an increased risk for some health conditions, including some types of cancer, based on your genes. A genetic test looks for specific harmful gene changes, called mutations or pathogenic variants, that can cause you to develop a genetic condition. Gene changes are like spelling errors within your body's instruction manual.

Most genetic tests look for changes in a group of genes called a panel. However, testing may look for changes in a single gene when there is a known genetic mutation in your family. The most common genes typically thought of related to cancer risk are BRCA1 and BRAC2. These genes are associated with breast and ovarian cancer. It's known that changes in other genes can increase risk for these cancers, as well.

There also are gene panels that assess risk for other cancers, such as colorectal, pancreatic, prostate, liver, uterine and endometrial cancers.

3 Am I guaranteed to get cancer if I have a known gene?

No. Inheriting a harmful gene change means that you have an increased risk for cancer, but it does not guarantee that you will develop a cancer in your lifetime.

"If testing shows that you have an increased risk for cancer, you may need to be screened earlier or more often," Mitchell says. "For example, if you have a change in the BRCA gene that increases your risk for breast cancer, your care team will recommend that you have mammogram or MRI breast screenings beginning at a younger age or more frequently. The genetic counselor will explain your associated cancer risks and screening recommendations based on your genetic test results."

4 What criteria do I need to meet to have genetic testing completed?

Your health care team may recommend genetic testing based on guidelines established by the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN). These guidelines use factors such as your personal cancer history, family cancer history, ancestry or the presence of abnormal cells to determine if you qualify for genetic testing.

If you do not meet the NCCN guidelines, you can still pursue testing. Your health insurance may not cover any or all of the testing costs, so more out-of-pocket expenses to be tested are possible.

5 Can genetic testing help during cancer treatment?

If you are battling cancer, genetic testing can help your care team make recommendations for treatments and surgical procedures. For example, some cancers associated with genetic mutations respond better to certain types of chemotherapy treatments. Similarly, genetic testing can help you determine between a lumpectomy or a mastectomy when making surgical decisions about breast cancer. It also can affect the management of cancer risk over time.

"The results also can help other family members," Mitchell says. "Potentially, your children, siblings, nieces and nephews could have inherited the same gene mutation. Knowing this information can help them establish early screening schedules and make healthy decisions about their lives."

6 How can I prepare for a genetic testing consultation?

Gathering a detailed family health history is the most important thing to prepare for a genetic counseling appointment. Try to gather information about relatives, including types of cancer diagnosed, age of diagnosis, current age or age at death. Also find out if any relatives have perviously had genetic testing completed.

If no previous genetic testing has been performed, often the best person to be tested is the family member with cancer. That person is most likely to have a genetic change if there is one. If an affected family member is unavailable for testing due to death or lack of interest, an unaffected person can still be tested.

"Something else to think about before your consultation is the purpose of your test," Mitchell says. "Younger patients usually want to know their personal risk so they can do extra screening. Older patients who are cancer survivors may wish to gather information and share it with downstream family members so they are aware of harmful genetic changes they could have potentially inherited."

7 Am I only able to get cancer if I have the BRCA gene or one of these other genes?

A common misconception is that you have one of these genes or you don't. Everyone has the BRCA genes and these other genes associated with cancer risk. The role these genes play in the body is to prevent cancer from occurring.

It's when a harmful change occurs in one of these genes that causes it not to work like it should. This leads to the increased risk for cancer to develop.

People without these harmful changes can still develop cancer, but the risk is not as high as someone who has a hereditary predisposition.

8 Am I more likely to inherit something from a parent of the same sex as me? Or the parent that I most resemble?

No. Every person has two copies of every gene—one copy inherited from each parent. If a parent has a harmful genetic change in one copy of a gene, it is random which copy they will pass on to children.

Every child has a 50-50 chance of inheriting the typical copy or the changed copy, regardless of you or your parent's biological sex, or whether you more closely resemble one side of the family.

9 There is breast cancer on my dad's side of the family, I'm not at risk because my dad can't pass that on, right?

People often think that a heritable risk for some cancers, such as breast and ovarian cancer, can't be passed on from males. This is not true.

All people, regardless of biological sex, can carry a heritable risk factor for any type of cancer and can pass it on to any of their children.

"While you can't change your genes, you can control some aspects of your environment, such as diet and physical activity level, as well as alcohol and tobacco use," Mitchell says. "That's why it's still so important to live a healthy life, regardless of your personal and family genetic history."

Healthy Living

If you spend time in the sun ...

... Be sure to eat foods that support the immune system, which helps rebuild skin cells that have been damaged by the sun.

Body builders

Daily requirements of some nutrients essential to immune system, in milligrams:

Vitamin E	265
Vitamin A	1,200
Vitamin C	500 to 1,000
Q10	30
Beta carotene	6 to 30
Lycopene	6

Source: Danish magazine IN,
Graphic: Tribune News Service

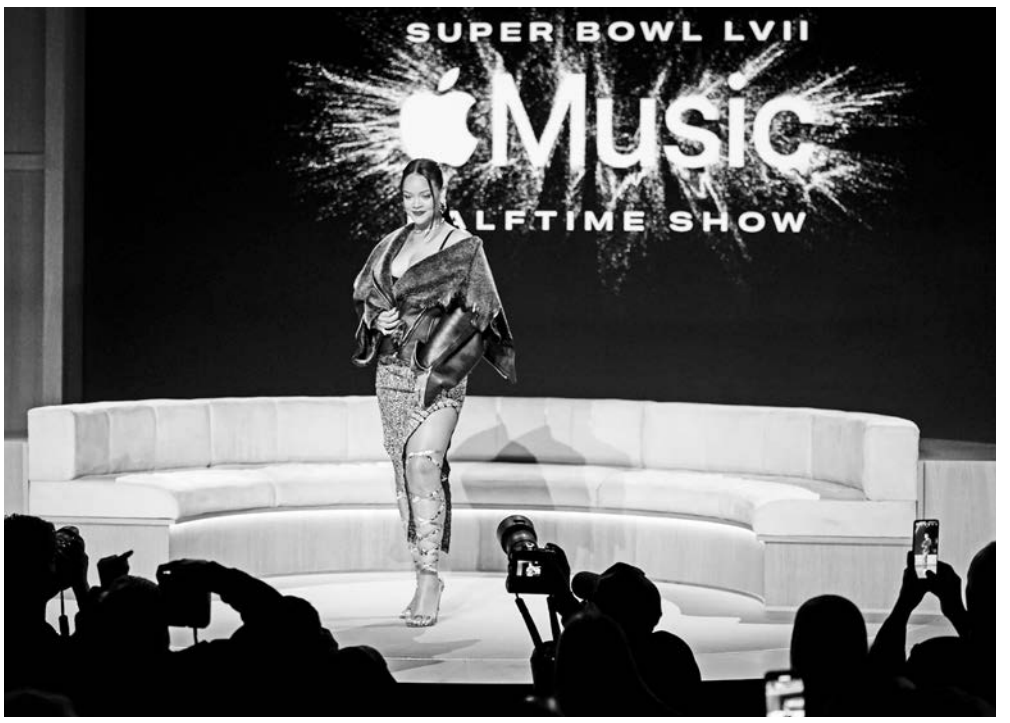
Life & Style

Rihanna promises a 'jam-packed' Super Bowl halftime show

PHOENIX (AP)—Rihanna is putting in the work ahead of her Super Bowl halftime show, focusing so hard on what she promises will be "a jam-packed show" that her upcoming birthday and Valentine's Day almost slipped her mind.

"The setlist was the biggest challenge. That was the hardest, hardest part. Deciding how to maximize 13 minutes but also celebrate—that's what this show is going to be. It's going to be a celebration of my catalog in the best way that we could have put it together," Rihanna said.

At a media preview Thursday ahead of Sunday's matchup between the Philadelphia Eagles and Kansas City Chiefs, the music superstar and new mom said her appearance—her first live event in seven years—feels "like it could have only been now."



AP

Rihanna poses for a photo after a halftime show news conference ahead of the Super Bowl 57 NFL football game, Thursday, Feb. 9, 2023, in Phoenix.

The singer said she was initially unsure about taking on the challenge of performing during a time when she was three months postpartum and wondered "should I be making major decisions like this right now? I might regret this."

"But when you become a mom, there's something that just happens where you feel like you can take on the world, you can do anything," Rihanna said. "The Super Bowl is one of the biggest stages of the world. As scary as that was, because I hadn't been on stage in seven years, there's something exhilarating about the challenge of it all."

A nine-time Grammy Award-winner, Rihanna has 14 No. 1 Billboard Hot 100 hits, including "We Found Love," "Work," "Umbrella" and "Disturbia." She and rapper A$AP Rocky recently welcomed her first child.

"At the end of the day, if it flops or it flies, my name has to stand by that. And so I really get involved with every aspect of anything I do," she said.

Halftime performance sponsor Apple Music held a moderated event Thursday, but moderator Nadeska Alexis was the only journalist allowed to ask Rihanna questions.

Rihanna joins a list of celebrated entertainers who have played during Super Bowl halftime shows, including Beyoncé, Madonna, Coldplay, Katy Perry, U2, Lady Gaga, Michael Jackson, Jennifer Lopez, Shakira and The Weeknd. Last year, hip-hop was celebrated with Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, Eminem, Mary J. Blige and Kendrick Lamar all performing.

The singer had previously declined to perform in the 2019 halftime show out of solidarity with Colin Kaepernick. But she has said that the timing and circumstances this time around were right for her.

Country music star Chris Stapleton will sing the national anthem, while R&B legend Babyface will perform "America the Beautiful." Actor-singer Sheryl Lee Ralph will also perform "Lift Every Voice and Sing." When asked who they were cheering for on Sunday, Ralph said she was rooting for the Eagles while Stapleton and Babyface said they were backing Rihanna.

Ralph applauded the NFL for making an effort toward being inclusive and "represent all people" through the three songs.

"On a day, Super Bowl Sunday, 200 million people coming together to sit and experience it here, what a time and what a way to bring us all together," she said. "I'm very pleased and very happy to be able to be on the 40-yard line."

Babyface said he first started singing "America the Beautiful" as a sophomore for a play in high school.

"It's hard to believe that so many years ago, which is a lot of years ago, that I'm here to sing 'America the Beautiful,'" he said. "Back then, my mom was in the audience and she couldn't believe I was up there on the stage singing. Like the shy kid who actually got up there singing. To think of her looking at this now and see me at this moment singing 'America the Beautiful,' it's full circle."

Alec Baldwin says part of shooting charge unconstitutional

By ANDREW DALTON
AP ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

Alec Baldwin on Friday asked a judge in New Mexico to dismiss a five-year firearm sentencing enhancement in the charges against him, saying it is unconstitutionally based on a law passed after the shooting on the set of the film "Rust."

"The prosecutors committed a basic legal error by charging Mr. Baldwin under a version of the firearm-enhancement statute that did not exist on the date of the accident," a court filing from Baldwin's attorneys said.

Baldwin and Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, the weapons supervisor on the set of the Western, were charged last month with felony involuntary manslaughter in the shooting death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins.

Hutchins died shortly after being wounded during rehearsals at a ranch on the outskirts of Santa Fe on Oct. 21, 2021. Baldwin was pointing a pistol at Hutchins when the gun went off, killing her and wounding the director, Joel Souza. Hutchins' parents and sister filed a lawsuit over the shooting Thursday, after a similar suit filed by her husband and son was settled.

Baldwin's attorneys also filed a motion on Tuesday to disqualify the special prosecutor in the case, asserting that her position as a state lawmaker constitutionally prohibits her from holding any authority in a judicial capacity.

Baldwin's legal team is mounting an aggressive legal fight against the charges before he has even made his initial court appearance, which is scheduled to take place by videoconference later this month. Baldwin has not been arrested.

"Another day, another motion from Alec Baldwin and his attorneys in an attempt to distract from the gross negligence and complete disregard for safety on the 'Rust' film set that led to Halyna Hutchins' death," district attorney's spokeswoman Heather Brewer said in an email.

She added that the prosecution team "will review all motions—even those given to the media before being served to the DA. However, the DA's and the special prosecutor's focus will always remain on ensuring that justice is served and that everyone—even celebrities with fancy attorneys—is held accountable under the law."

The manslaughter charges against Baldwin and Gutierrez-Reed include two alternative standards and sets of penalties, and a jury can decide which to pursue, according to prosecutors.

Woman really makes herself at home when family travels

DEAR ABBY: Whenever my husband, kids and I go away, my mother-in-law insists on staying at our house. She then rearranges the rooms in my house, moving things to where she thinks they should be. She also manages to leave behind her toiletries in the bathroom. More than once she has thrown a party for her friends during our absence. It drives me crazy. Going on vacation stresses me out because I have no idea what I'm going to come home to. When my husband tells her I don't like when she rearranges things, she gets defensive and cries about how she "can't understand why I hate her." I don't hate her; I just wish she would respect my boundaries in my house. Advice?

INVADED IN PENNSYLVANIA

DEAR INVADED: I'm glad to provide some. The next time your MIL insists on housesitting while you are on holiday, say you have made other arrangements and do not waver. (If necessary, change the locks.)

■■■■

DEAR ABBY: My husband had a stroke five years ago. I've been taking care of him ever since. I recently found out that he cheated on me. I want to get him into a VA home. What form would I need? I'm hoping to avoid a messy divorce. I'm fine if we stay married but no longer live together. He accuses me of "not doing anything." Our house is paid for and we have no debts. Our daughters are grown and live elsewhere. Should I contact an attorney?

WANTS OUT IN THE SOUTH

DEAR WANTS OUT: By all means, contact an attorney. You have a responsibility for your husband's welfare. Abandoning him to a VA home may not be the best solution for HIM, even though it may seem like a convenient one for you. Do nothing in anger. Before making any plans, you might want to discuss this with your daughters, who may be able to suggest alternative solutions to the one you are considering, such as hiring a part-time caregiver for your husband.

■■■■

DEAR ABBY: Long ago, my parents purchased a large burial plot for our entire family, including spouses if we have them. My spouse isn't eligible because he doesn't fit the cemetery's religious requirement. My parents and I also don't see eye to eye on politics.

Our relationship has greatly diminished over the last few years—so much so that I no longer want to spend eternity next to them when my time comes. Part of me says let it be, but they seem to relish the idea that we will "all be together," when in reality, I do not. I'd like to be cremated, which also goes against religious beliefs. Thoughts?

BAD SON IN VIRGINIA

DEAR SON: I think it's your body, your choice. Because most parents die before their children, the odds of your folks being buried before you are great. In the meantime, since their fantasy of one big happy family plot is something they relish, be kind and don't ruin it for them.

■■■■

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

I SHOULD BE DOING MY HOMEWORK NOW.
BUT THE WAY I LOOK AT IT, PLAYING IN THE SNOW IS A LOT MORE IMPORTANT.
OUT HERE I'M LEARNING REAL SKILLS THAT I CAN APPLY THROUGHOUT THE REST OF MY LIFE.
SUCH AS?
PROCRASTINATING AND RATIONALIZING.
© 1993 Watterson/Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication
WATTERSON 2-13

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

CONGRATULATIONS.
YOU'VE OFFICIALLY LEFT OUR CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS UP LONGER THAN ANYONE ELSE ON OUR STREET.
THANK YOU. I'D LIKE TO THANK MY COUCH AND TV, WITHOUT WHICH THIS HONOR WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE.
©2023 Glenn McCoy/Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication www.gocomics.com
1-13

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Avril follower
4 Conditions
7 Scratched (out)
11 Pinnacle
13 Hearty quaff
14 Ginormous
15 Grand — (four-run homer)
16 Promptly
17 Rocker — Pop
18 North African capital
20 Knitting stitch
22 Napkin's place
24 Check cashers
28 Best
32 La Scala city
33 — avis
34 Witty one
36 "A Doll's House" heroine
37 Knee support
39 Talking nonstop
41 Fashions
43 Arthur of "Maude"
44 Soon, poetically
46 Group of three
50 Blacken on a grill
53 Triathlon segment
55 Not busy
56 "No harm done"
57 Capote nickname
58 Fly like a hawk
59 Only
60 Egos' counterparts
61 — -Manuel Miranda

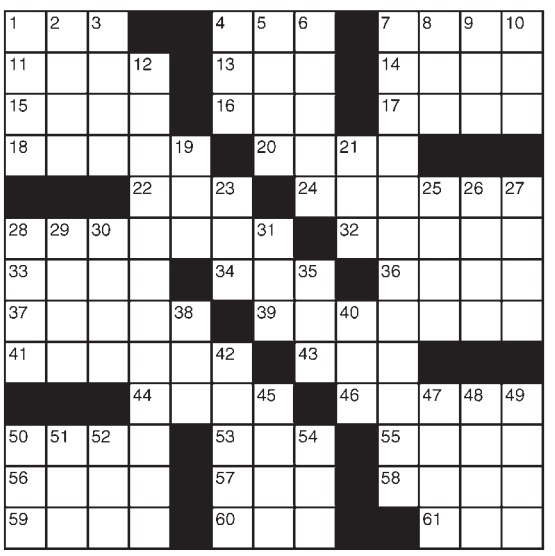
DOWN

1 Sail support
2 Rights advocacy org.
3 One-named supermodel
4 Author Fleming
5 Broadway failure
6 Clinch
7 Netflix series starring Lily Collins
8 Beer barrel
9 Omelet need
10 24 hours
12 "Game of Thrones" actress
19 America's uncle
21 Hit hard
23 Dog's foot
25 "The Time Machine" people
26 Deserve
27 Hitch
28 Spheres
29 Fraction
30 Serving aid
31 Nonclerical
35 Prattle
38 Poetic dusk
40 Favorite
42 Longtime Chicago maestro
45 Dweeb
47 Teen fave
48 Jai —
49 "Wild" actress Laura
50 Prefix with gender
51 Med. plan option
52 "You've got mail" ISP
54 Gloomy guy

Solution time: 26 mins.

M	A	M	M	A	■	S	A	D	■	A	D	S
T	R	U	E	D	■	A	L	E	■	B	R	O
V	I	S	T	A	■	L	O	V	E	Y	O	U
■	■	T	O	P	H	A	T	■	R	S	V	P
A	N	Y	■	T	I	M	■	D	A	M	E	S
P	O	O	F	■	R	I	C	E	S	■	■	■
B	R	U	I	S	E	■	O	L	E	O	L	E
■	■	■	L	I	S	T	S	■	S	N	A	G
B	L	I	M	P	■	R	E	S	■	L	B	O
A	O	N	E	■	H	O	C	K	E	Y	■	■
T	O	L	D	Y	O	U	■	Y	A	Y	M	E
E	K	E	■	A	N	G	■	P	R	O	M	S
S	S	T	■	M	E	H	■	E	L	U	D	E

Last Friday's Answer 02/13



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Mena Suvari, 44; Kelly Hu, 55; Peter Gabriel, 73; Stockard Channing, 79.

Happy Birthday: If you look for unique solutions to existing problems, you'll clear the way to answers and get the results you want. Make changes you feel passionate about and strive for a better future. Channel energy and say no if someone infringes on your time or takes advantage of you financially. Be bold, speak up and move forward with confidence. Your numbers are 3, 8, 17, 24, 29, 33, 47.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Do whatever it takes to resolve issues. You will leave a lasting impression on someone you are trying to please. If you look at the big picture, a plan that positions you for success will pop up and lead to meeting like-minded people. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Stick to your own devices instead of following in someone's footsteps. Finish what you start and embrace what makes you happy. You have more options than you realize, and it is best to distance yourself from anyone trying to make your decisions. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Don't believe everything you see or hear. Someone will be using unusual means to persuade you into getting involved in something that isn't tangible. Use your intelligence to outmaneuver anyone trying to take advantage of you. Use experience, knowledge and discipline to succeed. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Follow your imagination and let your creative drive lead the way. You'll find it easier to come up with original ideas that will speed things up and motivate you to be a leader. Mix business with pleasure, and you'll flourish. ✪✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Take a unique approach to exploring interests. A self-improvement project will lead to personal growth. Physical activity will require precision, thought and caution to avoid injury. Let intelligence be your guide when dealing with partnerships and professional advancement. ✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: Imagine how you want life to be and make the necessary alterations. It's up to you to make your dreams come true. Waiting for someone to step in and do things for you won't be satisfying or fruitful. Self-improvement is favored. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Take a moment and revisit your plans, the cost involved and the paperwork that needs updating. Wait before you give the go-ahead to someone, or a promise may be difficult to keep. Give yourself the time necessary to do things properly. ✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* You'll need a clear head to come up with the right answers, choices and actions. Don't fear being different or taking the road less traveled. Do your own thing, and you'll feel proud of your accomplishments and excited about your direction. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Take the plunge and outdo yourself; use your skills in new and exciting ways, but don't lose sight of what you are trying to achieve. Having a purpose will result in confidence and completing whatever you want. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* An open mind will prompt a magical journey. Listen, contribute and develop a plan to help you bring about changes at home or work that offer opportunities. A positive attitude and physical action will lead to financial gain. ✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: Size up the possibilities and put a plan in place that is realistic and conducive to getting things done on time. Uniquely doing something will draw attention to you and bring about positive change. Self-improvement is favored. ✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* You'll have a change of heart that motivates you to embrace what's important to you and to let go of the situations holding you back. Don't let anger kick in when your energy needs positive direction to achieve your desired results. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are curious, determined and discreet. You are resourceful and imaginative.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

				4	7		8	1
2	1	8			9	4		
	5	7		2				3
				1	2			
3	9	6	7	5	4			
	8		9					
	6	3	4	7	5		1	
8	2	1	6			7	5	
7	4					9	3	6

Difficulty: ★ 2-13

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Friday's Answer

3	1	2	9	7	5	4	6	8
5	9	7	6	8	4	3	1	2
4	6	8	1	2	3	5	9	7
6	8	4	2	3	1	9	7	5
9	7	5	8	4	6	1	2	3
1	2	3	7	5	9	6	8	4
7	5	9	4	6	8	2	3	1
8	4	6	3	1	2	7	5	9
2	3	1	5	9	7	8	4	6

Difficulty: ★★★★ 2-10

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

JULIA GARNER **Solution: 10 letters**

G	O	O	D	L	E	H	C	A	R	G	W	E	N	T
I	W	K	Z	E	C	T	Y	D	L	I	U	G	S	H
M	A	L	I	A	B	C	E	A	Y	D	D	A	M	E
A	L	L	I	D	R	U	K	R	A	M	N	S	L	A
T	L	N	A	A	S	K	T	P	R	F	E	O	I	T
E	A	A	M	R	P	L	A	N	N	A	R	A	F	E
M	N	H	A	O	Y	R	H	G	G	W	D	L	E	R
B	G	T	R	S	K	O	N	Ⓡ	I	A	L	O	L	P
R	M	R	D	E	J	I	E	Ⓤ	R	R	I	R	E	E
E	O	A	R	Y	T	B	E	Ⓣ	L	D	H	O	C	R
L	R	M	T	N	S	S	V	Ⓗ	S	S	C	R	T	K
A	E	R	E	D	E	M	O	D	E	R	N	R	R	S
N	I	V	N	O	N	W	L	F	W	A	C	O	I	H
D	N	A	A	M	D	N	A	R	G	E	Y	H	C	O
I	L	R	J	M	A	Y	L	R	E	B	M	I	K	W

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Anna, Awards, Breland, Children, Debut, Dirty John, Drama, Electrick, Ellie, Films, Foster, Girls, Good, Grandma, Guild, Gwen, Horror, Inventing, Jane, Kids, Kimberly, Landsberg, Langmore, Love, Maddy, Maniac, Marcy, Mark, Martha, May, Modern, Ozark, Parker, Perks, Prada, Rachel, Rola, Role, Rose, Ruth, Sage, Send, Show, Spy, Tami, Terra, Theater, Waco, York

Last Friday's Answer: Snowman

The NEW **Volume 70** can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

Jokic's NBA-leading 20th triple-double leads Nuggets to win

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)—Nikola Jokic had 30 points, 16 rebounds and 10 assists for his league-leading 20th triple-double and the short-handed Denver Nuggets handed the Charlotte Hornets their seventh straight defeat, 119-105 on Saturday night.

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope added 15 points and Bruce Brown and Michael Porter Jr. each had 14 for the Nuggets, who snapped a string of four straight road losses.

Denver played without Aaron Gordon (rib contusion) and Jamaal Murray (knee inflammation), but outscored the Hornets 62-45 in the second half.

P.J. Washington had 22 points and Gordon Hayward added 21 for Charlotte. LaMelo Ball finished with 18 points, 12 assists and nine rebounds. The Hornets endured another rough night from the foul line, converting just 17 of 29 attempts. Charlotte is 28 of 52 from the stripe in its last two home games.

AP

Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic (15) drives past Charlotte Hornets center Nick Richards during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Charlotte, N.C., Saturday, Feb. 11, 2023.

KNICKS 126, JAZZ 120

NEW YORK (AP)—Jalen Brunson scored 22 of his 38 points in the first half, Josh Hart had 11 points off the bench in his Knicks debut and New York outlasted Utah.

Julius Randle added 31 for New York, which has won three of four to improve to 31-27. R.J. Barrett scored 20 points before fouling out, and Immanuel Quickley finished with 15.

Hart, acquired Wednesday night from Portland, made a quick impact on his new team while adding seven rebounds and four assists.

76ERS 101, NETS 98

NEW YORK (AP)—Joel Embiid had 37 points and 13 rebounds, James Harden scored 29 points in his first game in Brooklyn since being traded a year ago to begin a Big Three breakup, and Philadelphia beat the Nets.

The 76ers got a victory instead of overtime when Spencer Dinwiddie's 3-pointer was ruled too late after a video review.

Harden added six rebounds and six assists after being booed in introductions and then early in the game. He arrived in January 2021 to play with Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving, then asked out and was gone just 13 months later, swapped in a deal for Ben Simmons at last year's trade deadline.

LAKERS 109, WARRIORS 103

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—D'Angelo Russell had 15 points, six assists and five rebounds in his Lakers return after being acquired from Minnesota at the trade deadline, Dennis Schroder scored 26 points, and Los Angeles beat Golden State.

The Lakers' LeBron James sat out his second straight game with a left foot injury since becoming the NBA's all-time scoring leader Tuesday against Oklahoma City. Reigning NBA Finals MVP Stephen Curry of the Warriors was sidelined for a third game in a row with an injured left leg.

KINGS 133, MAVERICKS 128, OT

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—De'Aaron Fox scored 36 points, including six free throws in the final 18.4 seconds of overtime, leading Sacramento over Dallas.

Fox shot 12 of 23 from the field and scored 26 of his points in the fourth quarter and overtime. Domantas Sabonis had 22 points and 14 rebounds for his NBA-leading 44th double-double of the season before fouling out with 1:27 remaining in overtime. Terence Davis also had 22 off the bench for the Kings.

CAVALIERS 97, BULLS 89

CLEVELAND (AP)—All-Star Donovan Mitchell scored 19 of his 29 points in the second half and Jarrett Allen had 23 points and 10 rebounds, rallying Cleveland past Chicago.

Mitchell added 10 rebounds and Darius Garland scored 19 for Cleveland, which trailed 61-48 in the third quarter before unleashing a 43-17 run to go up by 13. The Cavaliers won their sixth straight and are 24-6 at Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse.

WIZARDS 127, PACERS 113

WASHINGTON (AP)—Bradley Beal scored 32 points, Kristaps Porzingis and Monte Morris added 17 apiece and Washington shot 70% from the field through the first three quarters of their rout of Indiana.

Washington led 80-57 after its highest-scoring half of the season. The Wizards gave up the first 10 points of the third quarter, bringing back memories of a couple recent games in which they blew 20-point leads, but they steadied themselves quickly and led 104-88 heading into the fourth.

HEAT 107, MAGIC 103, OT

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)—Tyler Herro scored 23 points, Jimmy Butler added 22, Gabe Vincent had 20 as Miami rallied to beat Orlando in overtime.

Vincent opened the overtime period with a 3-pointer, Herro scored twice from the lane and the Magic never caught up.

Maarkelle Fultz led the Magic with 17 points. Paolo Banchero had 16 points and 13 rebounds and missed a driving layup in the final seconds of the fourth quarter that was altered by Miami center Bam Adebayo.

Adebayo finished with 13 points, 17 rebounds and six assists for Miami, which overcame a nine-point deficit in the final 2:22 of the fourth quarter to force overtime.

HAWKS 125, SPURS 106

ATLANTA (AP)—Trae Young had 24 points and a season-high 17 assists, De'Andre Hunter added 24 points and Atlanta beat reeling San Antonio.

The Spurs (14-43), losers of a season-high 12 straight, are a half-game ahead of last-place Houston (13-43) in the Western Conference. Atlanta (29-28) has won two straight and four of six. The Hawks began the game in eighth place in the East.

Atlanta never trailed after Young's layup early in the third made it 65-64.

Keldon Johnson, San Antonio's leading scorer this season, was back in the lineup after missing Friday's double overtime loss at Detroit with left ankle soreness and finished with 25 points. Jeremy Sochan added 18.

NBA trade deadline sees Irving, Durant bolster West teams

By BRIAN MAHONEY
AP BASKETBALL WRITER

First it was Kyrie Irving to Dallas. Then came Kevin Durant to Phoenix.

The breakup in Brooklyn is rebuilding some contenders in the West.

Trade deadline day in the NBA on Thursday featured plenty of moves, with the Suns making the biggest as they chase the first championship in franchise history.

They acquired Durant by sending Mikal Bridges, Cam Johnson, first-round picks in 2023, 2025, 2027 and 2029, and a first-round pick swap in 2028 to the Nets, who also sent T.J. Warren back to his original team in Phoenix.

New Suns owner Mat Ishbia called it a "transformative day" for the team.

"Not only is Kevin one of the greatest and most accomplished players in the history of the sport, but his character also embodies the world-class commitment to excellence we are instilling across every facet of this organization," Ishbia said in a statement.

Jae Crowder, who didn't play this season in Phoenix, was moved to Milwaukee in the four-team trade. The Bucks sent Jordan Nwora, George Hill, Serge Ibaka and three future second-round picks to the Indiana Pacers.

Bridges, Johnson and Crowder helped the Suns reach the NBA Finals in 2021, and a return trip looks possible with Durant in their lineup.

"It's a close group," coach Monty Williams said. "You can imagine that's a tough blow to the group for the human side of it, but also exciting about what could be."

A day earlier, the Lakers agreed to send Russell Westbrook to Utah as part of a three-way deal including Minnesota that brought D'Angelo Russell back to Los Angeles.

"Just like that it's a war in the West!" Sacramento Kings guard Terence Davis II tweeted.

Trying to stay in it, defending champion Golden State reacquired Gary Payton II but dealt 2020 No. 2 overall pick James Wiseman in a four-team trade with Detroit, Portland and Atlanta.

The Lakers stayed busy up until the deadline with a couple more moves as they try to build a contender around NBA career scoring leader LeBron James. They added another big man in Mo Bamba from the Orlando Magic for Patrick Beverley, a second-round pick and cash considerations. The Magic said they would not require Beverley to report to the team.

The deadline was 3 p.m. EST, though most of the deals weren't approved by the league office until much later as teams swapped not only players, but plenty of draft picks.

"I'll show you how wrong I was," said Cleveland president of basketball operations Koby Altman, whose team was one of few that made zero moves. "I thought it was going to be a quiet, quiet deadline. But this is the NBA, and the NBA never stops."

Phoenix could end up being more powerful than last season's squad, which won an NBA-best 64 games, then flamed out with a second-round loss to Dallas. The Suns just got Devin Booker back from a groin injury that had sidelined him since Christmas and soon will add Durant to the lineup when he recovers from a sprained knee ligament. That's on top of Chris Paul and Deandre Ayton.

In another move, the Suns dealt Dario Saric, a 2029 second-round pick and cash to Oklahoma City for forward Darius Bazley.

The Mavericks also may be stronger after acquiring Irving to pair with Luka Doncic. Irving asked out of Brooklyn last week, frustrated by his negotiations for a contract extension, and he was headed West a few days later.

Then it was Durant, who had gone to Brooklyn with Irving in 2019.

"I just love the competition now that we can be in the same conference," Irving said.

The Lakers are still hoping they can make some noise. They acquired Russell—who began his career with the franchise—from Minnesota, and guard Malik Beasley and forward Jarred Vanderbilt from the Jazz. The deal sent Westbrook to Utah after the 2017 NBA MVP never thrived alongside James and Anthony Davis.

Minnesota got Mike Conley and Nickeil Alexander-Walker from Utah, along with three second-round picks.

The Lakers made yet another move, sending center Thomas Bryant to Denver and getting back Davon Reed and a second-round pick from the Nuggets. Bryant, who started 25 games and is averaging 12.1 points, could be a good backup to two-time NBA MVP Nikola Jokic.

The other team in Los Angeles was also busy. The Clippers reacquired Eric Gordon, who began his career with them in 2008, from Houston and landed Bones Hyland from Denver for two second-round picks as the third team in the swap with the Lakers and Nuggets.

The Clippers, who traded Luke Kennard to Memphis and John Wall back to Houston, also acquired center Mason Plumlee from Charlotte for point guard Reggie Jackson and a 2028 second-round draft pick in another deal.

San Antonio traded center Jakob Poeltl back to the Toronto Raptors for Khem Birch plus a first-round pick in the 2024 draft and a pair of second-round selections. Poeltl was one of the most-wanted centers on the market. He's averaged 12.1 points and a team-high 9.0 rebounds for the Spurs, who acquired Poeltl from the Raptors as part of the Kawhi Leonard-DeMar DeRozan trade in 2018.

The Philadelphia 76ers acquired forward Jalen McDaniels from Charlotte and sent forward Matisse Thybulle to Portland as part of a multi-team trade that also involves multiple draft picks.

Thybulle twice made the NBA All-Defensive second team but he has averaged just 4.4 points over four seasons with the Sixers. The 25-year-old McDaniels is averaging a career-best 10.6 points for the Hornets in his fourth season.

It was the second move in two days for the Blazers, who sent Josh Hart to the New York Knicks on Wednesday for Cam Reddish and a protected first-round draft pick.

10

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haul, as the contest was also used for the 2022 Oceania Weightlifting Championships. Barnhouse duplicated Santos' feat in the 109-kg weight class in the Mini Games and also topped the Oceania regional event.

Limes gained multiple gold medals, too, when he ruled the clean & jerk and total in the +109-kg class, while he added a bronze in the snatch and another gold in the Oceania tilt. Colisao took the gold in the snatch event in the same weight class in the Mini Games and a silver in the Oceania competition. In the 102-kg class in the Mini Games, San Nicolas bagged a pair of gold medals (clean & jerk and total) and a bronze in the snatch, while he won a gold in the Oceania meet.

Before the NMI weightlifters' gold rush, Sinclair put on a show as he powered the hosts' men's tennis team to a gold medal win against Papua New Guinea. Sinclair and the NMI Men's Tennis Team handed the islands its first gold medal in the Mini Games, while the No. 1 player in the Pacific delivered two more (singles and men's doubles) and a bronze in the mixed doubles. Sinclair also led the Pacific Oceania Team to a finals win against host Vietnam in the 2022 Asia/Oceania Group III Davis Cup Event less than two months after dominating the Mini Games. The NMI player continued to compete in International Tennis Federation and Association of Tennis Professional-ranking events and moved up the ladder, jumping from No. 770 in the world to No. 482.

Meanwhile, Guerrero, Coby Santos, and Sitchon competed in off-island events and had notable performances in their respective tournaments to make it to the monthly honor roll and qualify for the yearly award.

Guerrero was the January awardee for winning in the mixed doubles event in the 2022 Guam Badminton Invitational, while Santos earned the same recognition in February for leading the NMI Men's National Team in scoring in the NMI Friendship Classic held in Guam. Over in the Philippines, the 64-year-old Sitchon finished runner-up in his age group in the Cavinti Triathlon to win the December award. Last November, Okawa notched the monthly plum for prevailing in three divisions in the Dee Clayton Classic Bodybuilding and Physique Competition ***(PR)***

STRONG

From Page 20

the women's doubles, 21-4, 21-12, and Mallari and Gragasin outlasting Filimailangi and Mafi in the men's doubles, 23-21, 21-12.

In yesterday's match against Guam, Tsukagoshi and Malonzo delivered the game-winner for the NMI after they prevailed over Offlea Wang and Frederika Herman in the girls doubles, 21-16, 21-10. Tsukagoshi won her singles duel against Danielle Snaer, 21-7, 21-7, for the NMI's first win in the pairing. Earlier in the boys singles, Gragasin fell to Johnson Xia, 16-21, 12-21, to give Guam the upper hand.

After Tsukagoshi's girls singles victory tied the game, 1-1, the NMI grabbed the lead when Gragasin and Mallari topped Jacob Paredes and Derrick Yan in the men's doubles, 21-15, 21-9. Tsukagoshi and Malonzo then sealed the win in the women's doubles, while Xia and Snaer took the last game of the pairing, beating Mallari and Malonzo, 21-11, 21-14.

The triumph over Guam yesterday put the NMI at No. 4 in the final rankings behind New Caledonia, Cook Islands, and Tahiti. A similar 3-2 win over Cook Islands in their last game gave Tahiti the championships as the latter finished the competition unbeaten in five matches. New Caledonia secured third place following a 5-0 victory over Tonga last Sunday.

Meanwhile, NMBA president Merlie Tolentino congratulated the NMI U15 Junior National Badminton Team for a job well done in their first-ever off-island competition.

"Our players came from our interscholastic program, which as we all know just started a little over a year ago. They've never competed (in badminton) outside the NMI and had limited tournaments locally, but to stand toe-to-toe with New Caledonia, which has one of the strong badminton programs in the Pacific Oceania, and challenged powerhouse Tahiti and the developing Cook Islands is an achievement that we, at the NMBA, are proud of. They made their mark in New Zealand and I hope this will inspire them to stay committed with the program and keep working on improving their games and passing on the things they learned from the competition to their fellow students and teammates," Tolentino said.

The NMBA president thanked the Northern Marianas Sports Association, Tan Holdings, Tan Siu Lin Foundation, and Governor's Office for the assistance in sending the team to the regional competition and coaches Guerrero, Pangilinan, and Ezekiel Macario for training the youth squad. Tolentino also acknowledged the leadership of Badminton Oceania for moving ahead with the tournament and securing the safety of the participants amid the threat of the recent flooding in Auckland. ***(PR)***

EIGH GASES

Kagman High School's Alejandro Ortiz scored 13 points in their 2022-2023 IT&E Interscholastic Boys High School Basketball League game against Saipan International School last Wednesday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

AYUYUS

From Page 20

-pointers and scored a total of 24 points.

It was a give and take the whole game as both the Ayuyus and the Manta Rays made basket after basket, ending the whirlwind first half, 39-29—which 12 of 39 came from Satur's plays.

In the second half, the Ayuyus' Lucio Aldan stoked the fire lit by his teammates early on as he took it upon himself to secure their fourth W, as majority of the buckets he attempted sank in with precision—earning him a staggering 32 points—two of which were 3-pointers and 7 were free throws.

Throughout the game, the Ayuyus and Manta Rays were neck-and-neck, with the Mantas not giving up their run for the lead as Elijah Garcia added 22 points, John Kae Raquepo 10 points, and Christian Lucero 9.

However, the Ayuyus overpowered them on the defense as well and had extra assists from Nobet Hocog and Austin Diaz's 10 points each and Anthony Dikito's 9 points, ending the game 75-69.

In the other varsity bout that night, MHS defeated Mount Carmel School, 47-30. In the junior varsity games, KHS JV beat SSHS JV, 37-26 and MHS JV-2 won against MCS JV, 32-15.

In the varsity standings, KHS lead with 4-0; MHS is second with 3-0; MCS and SSHS are at 2-1; Agape Christian School is 1-3; SIS is 0-2; and Grace Christian Academy is still 0-4.

In the junior varsity standings, MHS JV is still undefeated at 4-0, KHS and MHS JV-2 are both tied at 2-2; and MCS JV have yet to win with five losses.

The next game day is set for this Thursday, with MHS vs SIS, SSHS up against MCS, MHS JV taking on MHS JV-2, and MCS JV battling KHS JV.

KHS 75 – Aldan 32, Satur 12, Hocog 10, Diaz 10, Dikito 9, Ortiz 2.

SSHS 69 – Asuo 24, Garcia 22, Raquepo 10, Lucero 9, Navarro and Konman 2.

Scoring by halves: 39-29; 75-69.

GCA

From Page 19

In other results that night, Saipan Community School beat Mount Carmel School, 15-21, 21-18, 15-12; Dandan Middle School varsity defeated Hopwood Middle School, 21-9, 21-15; and Dandan Middle School JV beat COVMS JV, 21-8, 21-17.

In Pool A standings, TMS is still on top with three wins; DMS and SCS are at 2-1; HMS is at 1-2; and Mount Carmel School have yet to win with four losses.

In Pool B Standings, ACS leads with three wins and one loss; SIS and GCA both improved to 2-1; FMS is 1-3; and COVMS has three losses.

In the junior varsity standings, DMS lead with a 2-1 card; HMS has one win; SCS JV and COVMS have one loss each.

SAIPAN

From Page 19

when it is time. We all know that Patrick Maholmes is playing but recovering from a high ankle sprain, as an athlete, you need yourself at 100% on the floor. Especially on the biggest stage on the biggest moments under the brightest spotlights. I think Jalen Hurts will not only win the Super Bowl, but also, as the head of his pack for an MVP."

—Reymark Castro, Pacific Islands Club SEA manager

"I'm going with the Chiefs because they've got the playoff experience to overcome the most difficult challenges. Also, I know James Glenn, Denise Myers, and Barb Wondrasek are Chiefs fans and they seem pretty smart. Heck, Denise once said she'd give an arm and a leg to get the Chiefs another ring and she's half-way there. Chiefs and Mahomes, 23-17."

—Brad Ruszala, communications consultant

Tough pick but gonna go for Eagles this time, 24-17, and Hurts as MVP. Better defense and rooting for rookie Super Bowl quarterback.

—Elias Rangamar, Northern Marianas development officer

Eagles 34, Chiefs 27. Not really my team but went with KC before. I Just wanna see others succeed.

—Jay Santos, Payless SuperFresh & Truckload Store general manager

If the Eagles win, maybe say 30-17, Hurts MVP. If the Chiefs win this, with Mahomes staying healthy enough to pull off a W Mahomes or Kelce the MVP.

—L.J. Castro, CNMI Youth Congress secretary/coordinator

Saipan's Super Bowl LVII picks

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The most dreaded day of the year for human resource departments has come. It's also open season for cops to give drivers DUI citations and doctors writing excuse slips until their hands become numb.

Seriously, it's the 57th rendition of the Super Bowl (for those who can't read Roman numerals) and the Kansas City Chiefs and the Philadelphia Eagles will take on each other for all the gridiron marbles.

Personally, I again have no horse in this Super Bowl as Tom Terrific has finally called it quits (for the nth time, wonder if Gisele will take him back?).

The Chiefs seems to be the underdog in this one as Brady's heir apparent Patrick Mahomes has a flat tire and the Eagles, behind super freshman Jalen Hurts, seem to be the real deal. If I were a betting man, I'd pick the Eagles in this one, 24-21. But since I'm more of a basketball fan, allow these pigkin fans below to sway your picks.

■■■

Babauta

Guerrero

Jay Santos

Joshua Santos

L.J. Castro

Masga

McDoulett

Myers

Rangamar

Reymark Castro

Ruszala

Tudela

Veloria

White

Scragg

"Final score: 38-21. The Eagles' offense can't be stopped. The Chiefs' DBs won't be able to contain the Eagles' WRs, and success in the passing game will open things up for some big runs for Miles Sanders. The Eagles' defense will keep Mahomes in check. Fly Eagles fly!"

—Mike White, The Law Offices of Michael A. White, LLC

"I was born and raised in Missouri and LOVE the Chiefs! Score, Chiefs 31, Eagles 27.

The Chiefs will win because the Mahomes-Kelce combo is unmatchable! Oh and the kicker rarely gets recognized but Butker will make the big kicks!

I think Mahomes will be the MVP. He has a chip on his shoulder coming off the high ankle sprain and still feeling like he let the team down at the AFC Championship game. He is going to show up with his Mahomes Magic!"

—Denise Myers, Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games silver medalist

"The final score will be Kansas City Chiefs, 24, Philadelphia Eagles, 14. I'm rooting for the Chiefs because they are the closest to home and I like Patrick Mahomes. I suppose I have to pick Mahomes as the MVP."

—Joey McDoulett, Green Flash Dive Services co-owner

"I'm going with the Eagles because my friends are going for the Eagles. I think Miles Sanders will be MVP."

—Sildrey Veloria, CNMI National Athletics Team member

"Let's do 30-21, Chiefs, and Mahomes will be MVP. Bummed out that they beat Joe Shiesty and the Bengals but I do want to see Mahomes and the Chiefs win another one."

—Joshua Santos, Office of Planning and Development

"Final score: Chiefs 31, Eagles 28. MVP will be Patrick Mahomes. I am not a big fan of either team, but I am rooting for the Chiefs this time. Should be a great game and a great way to spend time with friends and family."

—Joe Guerrero, Saipan Chamber of Commerce president

"I'm rooting for the Chiefs so Kansas City will win, 28-14, with Mahomes the MVP. I have a couple of friends from Kansas."

—Vicente "Ben" Babauta, Mini Games Organizing Committee CEO

"Both actually are identical and both had an amazing season and worked hard. I'm going for the Chiefs though, 34-27."

—Floyd Masga, Western Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Council coordinator

"I really bleed blue for the Dallas Cowboys. I am not a fan of the AFC but the Eagles are a rival of my team so by default I have to root for the Chiefs and Mahomes is fun to watch."

—Tony Scragg, Saipan Fishermen Association president

"The Eagles, 27-24, with Jalen Hurts the MVP. The Eagles were 8-0, but the odds make them the underdogs and I always root for the underdog.

Arizona hosting the superbowl is exciting! I remember all the festivities when they hosted Super Bowl XLIX! I know my friends out there are enjoying all the pre-Super Bowl events."

—Naomi Tudela, Northern Marianas Humanities Council program coordinator

"Final score 34-21 in favor of Eagles. The Philadelphia Eagles are a BAD team this year, when I say bad, I don't mean their performance is bad. What I'm saying is, THEY ARE A BAD TEAM. It has been a while since I saw the Eagles looking like this. It seems as if they can take down anyone, heck, anything. I can sense a feeling as if a predator is waiting patiently, eyes locked, talons sharp and ready, calm but wary, looking down at its prey and swooping in

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GCA, SIS edge opponents in MS boys v-ball

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

The Grace Christian Academy Eagles and Saipan International School Geckos edged their opponents in the NMIVA-PSS Interscholastic Middle School Volleyball League 2022-2023 last Thursday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

The Eagles swooped past the Agape Christian School Torchbearers in two sets, 21-14, 21-19, in a revenge-fueled game after they lost the previous game last Feb. 2, and handed the Torchbearers their first loss of the season.

Maximus Taitano of the Eagles leveraged on his position as the spiker and landed untouchable shot after shot over Torchbearer territory.

Middle blocker Rooney Gil along with Andy Kim and Michael Miller were all on the defensive as their well-angled soft touches at the net and jump blocks assisted in keeping the Torchbearers at bay.

LEIGH GASES

Grace Christian Academy's Rooney Gil, right, attempts to block a spike from Agape Christian School's Yang Song during their game in the NMIVA-PSS Interscholastic Middle School Volleyball League 2022-2023 last Thursday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Justin Ma and Kenny Zheng completed the Eagles' starting six, while the Torchbearers' rotation include Zihen Cai, Huaen Chen, Ziqian Cheng, Reyviel Escarlan, Haozheng Huang, Scott Shi, Yang Song, Haoyue Yang, and Shengshi Yang.

In the Geckos' game against the Francisco M. Sablan Middle School Napu Riders, the Geckos replicated their first set win 21-10, 21-10.

Moshe Sikkel used his height to full advantage as he blocked returns and spiked each attack that stuck on his sticky palms. A few aces up the sleeves of his teammates Daniel and Theo Joab also allowed the Geckos to pull away further from the Lancherus.

Nason Wessel, Aiden Camacho, Landon Pudney, and Allan Cabrera complete the Geckos line up, while the Napu Riders rotation include Kyle Tabenas, Aiden Gimed, Sean Morilla, Dezmon Camacho, Sean Digimon, Michael Elayda, Jairoh Guilas, Frank Lamanlan, D'Anthony Aldan, Xiaolin Guo, Vince Eusebio, Gian Antonio, Simon Camacho, Gairus Pangelinan, and Luke Yobech.

See GCA on Page 18

LEIGH GASES

Saipan International School's Moshe Sikkel, right, smacks a point down against a Francisco M. Sablan Middle School player during their game in the NMIVA-PSS Interscholastic Middle School Volleyball League 2022-2023 last Thursday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Jokic's NBA-leading 20th triple-double leads Nuggets to win

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Saipan's Super Bowl LVII picks

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Strong finish for NMI Junior Badminton Team

BADMINTON OCEANIA/PAUL FOXALL
The NMI's Lina Tsukagoshi returns to Guam's Danielle Snaer while her teammates watch from the bench during a singles match in the Pacific U15 Invitation Team Challenge over the weekend at the Auckland Badminton Stadium in New Zealand.

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—The NMI U15 Junior National Badminton Team ended their campaign in the Pacific U15 Invitation Team Challenge with a sweep after posting contrasting wins over Tonga and Guam over the weekend at the Auckland Badminton Stadium.

The NMI junior squad, made up of Shaina Malonzo, Ruth Charmaine Bautista, Lina Tsukagoshi, Justin Gragasin, and Jude Mallari, crushed Tonga last Saturday, 5-0, before closing out with a tough 3-2 victory over Guam last Sunday. The NMI representatives earlier lost to eventual third placer New Caledonia, 2-3, in their debut game in the competition last Friday. Champion Tahiti and runner-up Cook Islands also defeated the Janelle Pangilinan and Nate Guerrero-coached team.

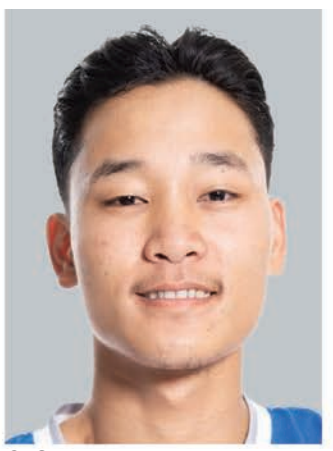
After the heartbreaker against New Caledonia and two more losses to the tournament favorites, the NMI came out strong in the final two days of the tournament, starting off with a demolition of Tonga. Gragasin gave the NMI its first win over Tonga after beating Pulu Seleti Mafi, 21-16, 21-16. In the girls singles, Bautista needed three games to edge Joyce Loto, 23-25, 21-14, 22-20. Bautista also won her mixed doubles match with Mallari as the NMI duo swept Semisi Filimailangi and Ela Mahe, 21-11, 21-9. The NMI also prevailed in the two other doubles match after only two games with Tsukagoshi and Malonzo dominating Malia Pateta and Loto in

See STRONG on Page 18

10 vie for top male athlete honors

Gold medalists in the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 lead the list of 10 nominees for the 2022 Northern Marianas Sports Association Male Athlete of the Year Award.

Barnhouse



C. Santos

Colisao

Guerrero

Limes

Okawa

R. Santos

San Nicolas

Sinclair

Sitchon

ATHLETES of the YEAR

Weightlifting's Raymond Santos, Angel San Nicolas, David Barnhouse, Jason Limes, and Joey Colisao earned gold medals in their respective class, while tennis' Colin Sinclair also collected a couple to share the NMSA Male Athlete of the Month (for June) honors and qualify for the year-end award. Completing the nominees' roster are badminton's Nate Guerrero, basketball's Coby Santos, bodybuilding's Javin Okawa, and cycling's Manny Sitchon. Winner of the coveted Male Athlete of the Year Award will be announced at the NMSA Banquet set for March 7 at the Hibiscus Hall of Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

Raymond Santos won three gold medals (snatch, clean & jerk, and total) in the Mini Games after ruling the 55-kg class of the weightlifting competition held at the Marianas High School Gymnasium. He added another gold to his

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Ayuyus on fire in boys HS caging

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

The Kagman High School Ayuyus boys basketball varsity team was on fire after blazing through four consecutive games and are currently undefeated, 4-0, in the 2022-2023 IT&E Interscholastic Boys High School Basketball League.

On the Ayuyus' most recent conquest, the Saipan Southern High School Ayuyus fell to their knees, 69-75, in a wildfire game last Friday in the air-conditioned but electric atmosphere of the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Coached by Adrian Flores, the Ayuyus had a fiery lineup running on a hot-streak of momentum they carried from a win against Saipan International School two days prior.

From the jump, Frankie Satur scored a field goal—immediately followed by a 3-pointer by Anthony Dikito.

The Manta Rays did not let up easily though as a 3-pointer also made it in from the jumper of Rasg Asuo—who ended up shooting four more 3

See AYUYUS on Page 18

LEIGH GASES
Kagman High School's Frankie Satur goes for a layup as Saipan International School's Yunwoo Nam attempts to block it during the 2022-2023 IT&E Interscholastic Boys High School Basketball League last Wednesday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.